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THOMAS AQUINAS

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CONTENTS

PAGE

INTRODUCTION . . . . . vii–ix

PART I

CHAPTER

I. § 1. HISTORY OF PERIOD 3
§ 2. PHILOSOPHIC AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND 9
§ 3. ARISTOTELIANISM 18
§ 4. SCHOLASTICISM 24

II. § 1. LIFE OF ST. THOMAS 33
§ 2. CHARACTER OF ST. THOMAS 49

III. MIND OF ST. THOMAS 55

PART II

IV. THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF KNOWLEDGE—
§ 1. TRUTH 75
§ 2. REALISM 79
§ 3. CONCEPTS AND JUDGMENT . . . 84
§ 4. ACT OF KNOWING 88

V. THE NATURE OF REALITY—
§ 1. BEING 99
§ 2. ACT AND POTENCY 104
§ 3. ANALOGY AND SUBSTANCE 118
§ 4. UNUM, VERUM, BONUM 134
§ 5. CAUSALITY 143
§ 6. ACCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALITY . . 147
§ 7. RELATION 154

CHAPTER PAGE

VI. The Existence and Nature of God . . 157

VII. God and the Universe 177

VIII. Nature and Man—

§ 1. The Physical Universe . . . 191

§ 2. Life 197

§ 3. Psychology 205

IX. Ethics 227

PART III

X. § 1. Later History of Thomism . . . 251

§ 2. Influence of St. Thomas . . . 258

§ 3. Modern Thomism 268

Summary of Life of St. Thomas . . . 277

Works of St. Thomas 278

Bibliography 281

Index 283

INTRODUCTION

UNTIL within comparatively recent times the subject of this book, St. Thomas Aquinas, received little recognition in this country. His lot has indeed been a strange one. Admired by his fellow-religionists of the Catholic Church, and accepted by them as the pattern of philosophic wisdom, he has nevertheless suffered almost a complete neglect outside that Church. The reasons for this are not far to seek. The great change in Europe at the time of the Reformation brought with it a distaste for medieval thought, which was aggravated by religious prejudices. Unfortunately for the continued reputation of St. Thomas, his views were identified with religious dogma, and so it came to pass that no one, save a Catholic, thought of studying his system from the point of view of pure philosophy and truth. Now, however, the situation has changed, and with the wane of old feuds and passions, a new interest in medieval history has sprung up and acquaintance with St. Thomas has become general. All are ready to acknowledge his claims to be a philosopher worthy of attention, and some even concede to him a position amongst the greatest thinkers of the world.

As, however, suspicions disappear slowly, it may be well to meet at the very beginning some of the objections that have been raised against his claims to greatness. The chief and most specious is that he was primarily a Christian apologist, and that consequently his attitude was incompatible with that of the true philosopher, whose sole concern is truth. A Catholic is bound to put faith before reason and accept unquestioned the content of his religious beliefs. The objection is, as I say, a specious one, but I do not think that it can bear examination. If it were true, then no believer could write philosophy

without making himself an agnostic. Again, not only St. Thomas would be blackballed, but also such excellent philosophers and churchmen as Bishop Berkeley, Bishop Butler and Malebranche, and even Descartes, Leibniz and Hegel, who were all professing Christians; in fact, if we think of it, many an Arabian and Indian philosopher as well. Besides, the objection rests on a false antithesis of faith and reason—and there are many other answers. But the best and final one is the work itself of Aquinas. It is irrelevant to the issue whether the author was an agnostic or a believer. The sole consideration for the reader is the truth or falsehood of his assertions and arguments. If the beliefs of St. Thomas interfere with the rational evidence he puts forward, invalidating or garbling it by illicit assumptions, then he must be written down as no philosopher. Now this can be decided only by experiment, and I have no doubt that St. Thomas would have wished to abide by this test. He sets down the truth as he sees it, and for him truth is something holy, to be approached with pure motive and without distraction. It is not St. Thomas but the reader, alas! who is sometimes without goodwill and without an open mind.

A second objection is to the effect that St. Thomas is only a disciple and imitator of Aristotle, and therefore lacks originality. The answer to this will be found in the course of this book, and at the end the reader can judge for himself. To this charge I fancy St. Thomas would have been very indifferent; *non numerentur auctoritates sed ponderentur*, talk not of the number of authorities but weigh their truth. Originality counted for him only in so far as it was implied in the discovery of truth.

Other objections, such as his unbending intellectualism and his ignorance of science, will be dealt with in the text. Formerly, ignorance of the period, of sources, texts and University life was an obstacle. This has now fortunately disappeared thanks to the labours of a number of scholars.

The sources have been brought to light by men like Denifle, Baeumke, Ehrle, Rashdall and others, while Mandonnet, de Wulf and Grabmann have lifted the mists which enveloped the thought of the period in which St. Thomas lived. For history I have relied on them and other workers in this field, and for the interpretation of the philosophy of St. Thomas I have had constant recourse to P. Sertillanges, P. de Bruyne, M. Gilson, M. Maritain, P. Olgiati, P. Maréchal and P. Rousselot, and to studies by P. Roland-Gosselin and P. de Munnyck.

Works on St. Thomas by Gilson, Grabmann and Olgiati have already been translated into English. The scope of the present volume will however be found, I think, to differ from them. I had hoped to be able to sketch the thought of St. Thomas historically, showing its development from one treatise to another. But the extent of his writings and the vastness of his system soon made me realise that the attempt was impossible within the compass of a moderately sized book. I have therefore tried to present his philosophy in its unity in the light of its fundamental principles. This has involved much condensation, but even so I have been unable to find room for his political thought. I fear, too, that this condensation and the metaphysical setting may make the following chapters difficult reading at times. My aim has been to present the thought of St. Thomas as sympathetically as I could ; a critical attitude would have delayed the march of the argument and expanded the size of this book beyond measure. On the other hand, when there are well-known difficulties and differences of interpretation, I have thought it right to mention them.

It remains to thank the kind friends who have helped me in the production of this book, and especially Miss S. Bliss for her trouble in correcting and indexing my manuscript.

M. C. D'ARCY.

OXFORD, 1930.

PART I

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CHAPTER I

§ 1. HISTORY OF PERIOD

In an Oxford manuscript of the *Summa Theologica* are to be found the words: "Here Thomas dies. O Death, how thou art accursed!" The writers of the time were, no doubt, exuberant in their expressions of admiration and dislike; Frederick II was *stupor mundi et immutator mirabilis*, and Richard of England, Cœur de Lion. St. Thomas had his share of these praises and titles, and to estimate their worth we have to allow for the habit of the age. But when all allowances have been made, the impression remains that the medievalists loved and appreciated men of size, and ranked St. Thomas as the peer in philosophy of Hildebrand and Barbarossa in ecclesiastical and secular power. They liked "mountainy" men. The thirteenth century, in particular, was an age in which men tried to move mountains. The Papacy and the Empire alike dreamed of universal jurisdiction; the universities, lately established, were packed with youth, anxious and determined to explore and master all the far continents of thought. In the perspective of history we can now see that the characteristic of the century was architectural or formative. In England and France common law and jurisprudence took shape, Magna Charta was signed, St. Louis dispensed justice under an oak tree at Vincennes, and universities like Paris received their permanent charters and statutes. Not that this quest for "the tranquillity of order" brought with it peace, though we do find many efforts, especially in France after the dark ages, to bring about a truce of God and leagues of

peace. As is usual in a period of vaulting ambition—and the Elizabethan can serve as another example—order is sought at the point of the sword. The Popes, not content with contesting the claims of the Empire and stirring up Guelf against Ghibelline, in their desire to make a union of Christendom after their own heart, preached to the Princes of Europe the need of a Crusade against the Turk. Even in the domains of philosophy and theology the system-making did not proceed without fierce disputes and wild speculation. The Albigensian heresy had made great headway in the south of France, the Abbot Joachim deluded many with his prophecies of a new dispensation of the Holy Spirit, and St. Thomas had to contend with a strong Averrhoistic faction at Paris. It remains true, nevertheless, that the spirit of the age was architectural; it was embodied in stone in the cathedrals, and in poetry in the hierarchical vision of Dante, and in thought it finds its most representative expression in the system of St. Thomas Aquinas. With justice his *Summa Theologica* has been compared with the thirteenth-century cathedrals. It shows the same sense of order and shape, and it is directed to the praise of God and the manifestation of his ways.

St. Thomas was a Dominican friar keeping himself apart, whether in Italy or at Paris, from purely secular matters, and devoted to teaching and speculation. There is no need, therefore, to narrate at any length the historical events, national or political, occurring around him. His family was involved in the quarrels of Papacy and Empire and suffered for their loyalties, but St. Thomas from childhood was evidently thought by his parents more suited to be a clerk than a warrior. His education was interrupted by the descent of Frederick II upon Monte Cassino, but from thence onwards we can follow his life's history almost without reference to national wars. In his political doctrine, it is true, the problems of the time necessarily affected his solutions, but even here he is more

a theorist than a practical reformer. At the date at which he was born Innocent III had been dead eight or nine years, and his protégé, Frederick II, " the child of Apulia," had begun to show his hand against the Church. Honorius III was set upon a new Crusade, and Frederick played upon this desire to win from the Pope permission to rule Sicily for his lifetime and make his son King of the Romans on condition he himself led an army to the Holy Land. He found excuses to evade this condition during the lifetime of Honorius, but on the accession of Gregory IX he was met by a fierce old man who would not be tricked. The story of how Frederick set sail and returned almost immediately on the pretext of illness, his excommunication and defiant expedition at the end of which he crowned himself in Jerusalem, is too well known to need repetition. The result was a long and embittered conflict, first with Gregory and then with Innocent IV, during which both Italy and Germany suffered. The peace of San Germano in 1230 brought a breathing-space, and during the five years it lasted Frederick founded the University of Naples and fostered a spirit of free inquiry by introducing to his court Jewish and Arabian scholars. The Lombard cities, however, were growing restless, and united in a league against him. Gregory excommunicated Frederick, and so the youth of St. Thomas was passed in evil days in a distracted Italy. Celestine IV lived too short a while to carry out a policy, and his successor, Innocent IV, like the great Innocent III, was determined to make the Church, and not the Empire, the centre of unity for Europe. The war turned in his favour ; the brethren of St. Thomas and the Franciscans were actively preaching a Crusade for him, and the death of Frederick in 1250 left him in a strong position. The years from 1254, when Innocent died, to 1270 were taken up with fights between Guelf and Ghibelline. The Empire had no leader and Pope Urban IV found a useful ally in

Charles of Anjou. Charles defeated Manfred, an illegitimate son of Frederick, and secured Sicily, and when the Sicilians called Conrad in to their aid, he crushed the latter at Tagliacozzo in 1268.

This blow proved final and 1270 saw the conclusion of a long phase in the history of the Empire. It had begun in 918 with the reign of Henry the Fowler, the first of the Saxon monarchs. Under the Saxon and Salian lines the Empire grew in power at first in conjunction with the Church. Strong rulers were needed both in Germany and France to preserve the unity of Christendom. But whereas in France, under the Capetians, the monarchy advanced in strength at the expense of the feudal lords and in alliance with the Church, the German Emperors were distracted by affairs in Italy and Sicily. Inevitably they came into conflict with the Papacy. The Church was in danger of being merged in the feudal system. Thanks greatly to the influence of Cluny, the Church realised the degrading consequences of such a position. Cluny was exempt from episcopal jurisdiction and had many privileges, which in the heyday of its power enabled it to make a stand against simony and the other corrupt practices of the time. In the renaissance, then, of the twelfth century, the Church was able to find leaders, and at Paris and Chartres and Rheims in the cathedral schools, in the monasteries of Cluny and Bec, at Cologne, St. Gall, and Fulda, promoted the culture and led the way to a union of Christendom. But this action on the part of the Church did not proceed smoothly. Papacy and Empire clashed in the matter of investitures, a clash that was to be the beginning of many evils, and is summed up in literature under the name of Canossa.

One result was that France became the centre of European culture instead of Germany or Italy. It was fortunate in having kings who could take advantage of the internal dissensions of Germany, the weakness of England under

John Lackland, and the jealousy of the great feudal lords towards one another. The monasteries and cathedral schools were secure enough to develop intellectually without the constant interruption of Guelf and Ghibelline faction cries. Under Philip Augustus (1179–1223) the system of administration was centralised in Paris, and that city took shape, with walls and castle and Louvre tower. Louis VIII strengthened his position both at home and with the Church by crushing the Albigensians, and after his death in 1226 Blanche of Castile surmounted the very difficult period of the minority of St. Louis by relying on the support of the clergy, the people, and Honorius III. No account of St. Thomas Aquinas can be complete if it does not include the figure of his fellow-saint and friend and king, Louis IX. He is the model of kings, as St. Thomas of philosophers and Dante of poets in the medieval hierarchy. He is the just ruler of political theory, a child of the Church, though no servile follower, and in keeping with thirteenth century ideals, his heart is ever in the Holy Land. From 1248 to 1254 he is engaged on an ill-fated enterprise there, and he returns there to die in 1270. Despite these absences, he takes a leading part in the politics of Europe, and at home he consolidates his kingdom and shows special favour to and interest in the University of Paris and the new religious orders of mendicant friars. These two new orders, the Dominican and the Franciscan, were the answer of the Church to the widening European outlook and the growing popular movements. Of the Dominican order in particular, it may be said that its work stood as an alternative to the plan of the Crusades. The supremacy in intellect was substituted for the attempt at supremacy in arms. St. Louis did not relinquish his dream of victory by arms over the Saracen, but he welcomed the coming of the friars to Paris and the University. There were, he saw, Christian victories to be won at home. The battle of Las Novas di

Toledo had ended the power of the Moors in Spain and Portugal, but their intellectual influence became only the more formidable. It developed the tendency to wild speculation in Paris and caused great alarm to the leaders of the Church. Here it was that the Dominican friars showed their mettle as crusaders. Their advent to Paris was, however, greeted with considerable hostility. The University and the seculars were jealous of this new body with its privileges and *esprit de corps*, and resisted its incorporation into its own life. St. Thomas, who came from Naples to Paris about the year 1245, had to pass through some unpleasant years amid bickerings and pamphlet warfare, before his own eminence and that of his colleagues won the recognition due to them. Fortunately, the intervention of the Papacy and the firm friendship of St. Louis were of great assistance to them during the first critical years.

We see, then, that the times in which St. Thomas lived needed a philosophic and Christian genius to shape architecturally the many tendencies now freely manifesting themselves. Europe had passed out of the dark ages, and with that liberation had come a race of great personalities and a spirit of daring enterprise. Politically and intellectually, control and direction were needed. The Crusades provided one outlet for the supercharged energy, and at the same time widened horizons and brought vividly before Christians the unity of their culture and religious belief. It is possible and not too fantastical to see within the small compass of the University of Paris in St. Thomas' lifetime a transcript of the world outside. There the mind of Christian Europe expressed itself in a struggle of words and ideas, and shaped itself into a unity of which the system of St. Thomas is an enduring expression and monument.

§ 2. PHILOSOPHIC AND RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

St. Thomas is no philosophic Melchisedech without ancestry, nor again the sole claimant to greatness among scholastic philosophers. His friends and contemporaries, Albert the Great and St. Bonaventure and his rival, Duns Scotus, are not dwarfed in his presence. Nevertheless tradition has rightly assigned him a certain pre-eminence, both because of the massive unity of his system and because that system reaffirms so much of the past in a measured and stately way. From the first century onwards the Christian thinkers had set to work to defend and develop the Christian teaching by adapting the current philosophic language to their creed. Their work, however, was primarily religious and apologetical and not philosophic, because they had as principal aim to safeguard the fundamental teaching of Christianity, to state and explain what was orthodox. It mattered little what school of philosophy they adopted. The Alexandrian Fathers, for instance, differed from those of Antioch, and both were far more familiar with the technical terms of philosophy than the Western Bishops. The trouble caused by these differences in philosophical tradition is plain from the Arian, Nestorian, and other disputes. In the end the current philosophies were made to serve their turn, but they also managed to cause a certain embarrassment when the medieval scholastics took up the threads of the past.

This embarrassment was due not only to the necessarily somewhat opportunist attitude of the Fathers of the early Church to philosophy, but to the nature of the prevalent philosophies. They descended from the golden age of Greece, but in the passage of time they had become confused and contaminated. The habit of the later age was eclectic, and

Stoic and Epicurean ideas were to be found commingled with Platonic and Aristotelian. Pride of place, once enjoyed by Athens, later passed to Alexandria, and in this cockpit of different civilisations a Platonic tradition survived, though it contained many another strain, Jewish, Oriental and Græco-Roman. Its greatest product was Neo-Platonism. There Plotinus first lived and taught. His philosophy rallied to its support the last defenders of paganism against the conquering religion of Christianity, and later through the influence of St. Augustine it became part of the inheritance of Christian Europe.

So great was the influence of this saint on the future of philosophy, and in particular on St. Thomas, that we must stop to consider it. Born at Tagaste, in Numidia, in the year 354, he was for a long time a Manichean, accepting a dual principle of good and evil. According to his own account, it was Plato who first opened his eyes to the falsity of his position. After his conversion to the Christian life he showed marked traces of Neo-Platonism in his views. This philosophy, with its emphasis on the world of Spirit and its ardour for union with the divine, accorded with St. Augustine's own aspirations. His change of life and reaction against the errors of his youth and subjection to the flesh, led him to sympathise with a system of thought which made little of the world of sense. He was harsh with paganism because he saw in it the picture of his former self, and he drew a violent contrast between the City of God and the city of man. In so far then as this sharp distinction between spirit and matter entered into his general philosophic and theological views, it gave them a list which needed righting. Christianity had always upheld the priority of spirit over matter and preached other-worldliness, but despite its aloofness from the Empire in its first days, and the practices and mode of life of hermits, stylites, and monks of the desert, it steadily refused to regard matter or the world as evil. Herein it

may be said to be more inclusive and comprehensive than Platonism, or, if this offend the lovers of that school, it called for a very mellow form of that philosophy.

I know that labels are invariably dangerous when affixed to movements of thought, and this danger is more pronounced in treating of those which, after many centuries, affected St. Thomas. In the mind of St. Thomas and of most men, Augustinianism stood for Platonic tendencies. What these tendencies were it is not easy to describe in detail. The school that went by the name of Augustine did not always abide by the words of its master ; it had something of his spirit and fastened on some of his doctrines. The same vagueness gathers round the names of Platonism and Neo-Platonism.[1] As already stated, the Greek traditions had become contaminated in the process of time, and the raids of the early Christian Fathers on contemporary thought helped to make precise the terms of Christian doctrine but added to the confusion of the sources from which they drew.

The original doctrine of Plato, for instance, cannot be accepted as identical with the Platonism of the early Empire, still less with that form of it which persisted in the later Augustinianism. It was enough that he should stand as a precursor of the Christian revelation in the realm of pagan philosophy, that his name should be associated with a sublime theory of " ideas " and of the Logos. In fact, there is no mention of the Logos in the authentic Platonic writings, and from Augustine onwards the " ideas " were more often than not interpreted as ideas existing in the mind of God.

It remains true, nevertheless, that Platonism must be

[1] The most striking evidence of the confusion which reigned even in the thirteenth century is given by the remark of St. Thomas in one of his earlier writings, that " Basil and Augustine and many other saints follow the opinions of Plato in matters which pertain to philosophy and not to faith. *But Dionysius nearly always follows Aristotle.*" Later in life St. Thomas recognised his error.

reckoned the greatest influence in the making of Christian philosophy, and that it has never died. Even before the coming of Christ it had made itself felt in Jewish thought by way of Alexandria. Later, in the third century A.D., Clement and Origen turned it to use in their theological speculations, and in the fourth, the two Gregorys and Basil applied it to their controversies with the Arians. The coming of Plotinus to Rome and the spread of Neo-Platonism in the West were instrumental in the adoption of it by St. Augustine. He came across it, as has already been said, at a crisis in his life, and though apparently he knew Plato only through Neo-Platonic sources, he conceived an undying admiration for him. The fact that Plotinus and Porphyry had supplemented Platonism with a spirit of religious enthusiasm and mysticism only stimulated Augustine the more. His genius transformed the philosophy and left at least the outline of a unified Christian philosophy to future ages.

From St. Augustine, then, to St. Thomas, the mind of Christendom was predominantly Platonic. This does not mean that there were no Aristotelians before St. Thomas, nor that the influence of Aristotle counted for little. As we shall see, certain texts of Aristotle and the commentaries on them laid the foundations of medieval Scholasticism, and there were not a few partisans of his teaching. But he was more like a *maître d'armes* while the youth of Europe fought for Plato's favour. We have only to turn to the works of the pseudo-Dionysius and consider their vogue, for convincing evidence of this. These works, written about the beginning of the sixth century, are permeated with Neo-Platonic ideas; they formed the mystical language of Christianity and dictated the lines of argument and thought to be used when writing of God. The Aristotelian St. Thomas shows no less deference to them than the Augustinians. Again it is noteworthy that the first outstanding genius after the Patristic age, Scotus Eriugena,

is a wholehearted Neo-Platonist, with a vision of the universe moving out from God and deploying out in rank and file, and finally returning to its First Beginning. This vision, be it said, haunted the medieval philosopher ever after. And if it be held that, whatever the merits of Eriugena, Christian thought reverted in him to paganism for a moment, there is the " father of Scholasticism," St. Anselm of Canterbury, to prove the dominant influence of Platonism. The number of manuscripts of his writings which survive show the esteem in which he was held. He was more interested in theology and faith than in pure philosophy, and so, compared with Eriugena or St. Thomas, he looks more like an essayist than the author of a system. But as the disciple of St. Augustine and as linked with him, he exhibits the heights which the tradition of Christian Platonism could reach. No philosopher of the Middle Ages surpassed him in delicacy or vigour of mind.

The reason for the popularity of Augustinianism is not far to seek. The Neo-Platonist philosophy was directed to ecstasy and union with the One, and it is easy to see how this was convertible into Christian terms! *Verus philosophus est amator Dei*, the true philosopher is the lover of God, echoed St. Augustine. " Show a sheep a green bough and thou drawest him. Let a child see some nuts and he is drawn by them. As they run they are drawn, drawn by taste, drawn without bodily hurt, drawn by a line bound to their heart. If then among earthly things, such as be sweet and pleasant draw those that love them as soon as they are seen so that it is the truth to say, ' his special pleasure draweth each,' doth not that Christ, whom the Father hath revealed, draw? What stronger object of love can a soul have than the truth? " In this search under the compulsion of love all earthly copies of truth and goodness are greeted with a certain dissatisfaction. The soul wishes to fly to God and to be likened (*assimilari*) to him. " *Deum et animam scire cupio. Nihil plus? Nihil*

omnino."[1] No wonder such a human, and at the same time sublime and Christian conception of the end of philosophy captured the hearts of succeeding generations, and lived on in various forms in medieval Scholasticism.

As can be seen from the quotations given, philosophy according to St. Augustine is an affair of the whole man, of heart as well as head. This emphasis on the will had interesting consequences. St. Augustine himself maintained that a holy and pure life were necessary for an appreciation and understanding of truth. This is a salutary maxim but somewhat alarming for the philosopher, and when exaggerated it tends to a denial of the claims of the reason. Part of the suspicion with which Abelard was viewed came from his supposed rationalism, and St. Bernard and St. Peter Damien were voicing a widespread attitude of mind when they spoke disparagingly of the philosophical schools and of overmuch learning in religion. The question too of the relation between reason and faith—a question ever under discussion in the schools—seemed to some to be compromised. One result was to delay the emancipation of philosophy from dogma and the recognition of its autonomy. Another was to encourage a mysticism without any intellectual basis. When then, St. Thomas put aside experience and special illuminations, and appeared to minimise the importance of divine faith in cognition, he had to face disapproval from many quarters. He was accused of being unfaithful to the teaching of St. Augustine, of importing a peripatetic rationalism into Christianity and belittling the importance of faith. The thirteenth century had inherited from St. Augustine a rather obscure doctrine of the illumination of the mind by God. "God lighteth every man that cometh into the world," gave the Biblical warrant. The

[1] It is not without significance that St. Thomas uses the same word, *assimilatio*, in his account of the relation of known to knower. It is, in fact, the key word.

human mind understood *in rationibus æternis, in luce increata.* We can judge of the scandal caused when St. Thomas not only rejected this doctrine, but put in its place that of the Aristotelian "active intellect," a theory which, in the hands of the Arabians, was decidedly incompatible with Christian teaching.

It must not be thought that the evil effects which followed the teaching of St. Augustine had any necessary relation to it. The philosophy of St. Bonaventure, the contemporary of St. Thomas, suffices to disprove such a supposition, if the unfinished character of the works of Augustine leave a doubt. To Bonaventure's mind "among philosophers the word of wisdom was given to Plato, to Aristotle the word of knowledge. The one looked principally to what is higher, the other to what is lower. . . . But the word both of knowledge and wisdom was given by the Holy Ghost to Augustine. . . ." He is, then, a disciple of Augustine, and in his philosophy the old flowers into new beauty. With justice M. Gilson says that in reading his *Opuscula* one has the impression of being in the presence of Francis of Assisi, and he adds that "it is to this constant emotion of a heart feeling itself near to its God that we owe the refusal to follow the philosophy of Aristotle to its ultimate consequences, and the persistent claim of an intimate contact between creature and creator. Thus were safeguarded, at the very moment when the Aristotelianism of St. Thomas was about to triumph, the rights of a philosophical tradition, the inexhaustible fertility of which the great synthesis of Duns Scotus, and, beyond Duns Scotus, of Malebranche, was later to prove." Indeed, it is not difficult to regard this difference between the Thomist and Augustinian attitude as a phase in the age-long collision of intellectual and pragmatic or voluntarist philosophies of life. Neither St. Thomas nor St. Bonaventure was an extremist; both would have rejected more modern attempts to philosophise without love or

desire, to make science cover all modes of cognition, or on the other hand to ban logic in the name of religious and æsthetic experience, and set the will to believe in the place of truth. But at the same time both would have recognised below the excesses an affinity with one or other of their own predilections.

Thus both in spirit and in detail the Augustinians and St. Thomas were antagonistic. In the thirteenth century the particular doctrines of the former can be divided into two groups. The first include the theory of illumination already mentioned, the identification of the faculties or activities of the soul with the soul itself, and the substantial independence of the soul from the body. This latter is drawn from Plato and fits in with the popular conception of a spirit inhabiting a body and thwarted by it. St. Thomas, true to his Aristotelian principles, rejected this dualism. In his view a human being is one only by the union of body and soul, and we misconceive human nature when we imagine the soul to be complete and human by itself. To the same mistake he attributed the habit among his opponents of minimising the part played by sense in knowledge, and their acceptance of innate ideas and a native power to perceive the immaterial independently of the senses. In the second group may be placed certain un-Aristotelian theories of matter. To the Aristotelian, matter co-exists with form to constitute a being, and of itself it is nothing more than potency. The Augustinian held that matter also possessed positive being, though of an inferior order. In this matter the *rationes seminales* (seminal principles) were hidden, to develop later into the different species of material things. On the other hand spirits, even angels, had matter in their being ; they were possessed of both matter and form. One form was not, however, a necessity, as they admitted a plurality of substantial forms in what was composite. Strange as it may sound to modern ears, this question of the plurality

of forms was one of the most hotly debated at Paris and Oxford in the thirteenth century. We must remember that it touched on several theological doctrines, such as that of transubstantiation, the state of Christ's body in the tomb, and the veneration of the bodies of the saints. To err here was therefore dangerous, and this explains why such passion was aroused by the theory of St. Thomas that a fellow Dominican, Kilwardby, could condemn it as dangerous and Peckham call it a cancerous sore.

The strength of Augustinianism, however, did not rest so much on any particular doctrine as on the spiritual outlook it engendered. There had been Aristotelians before St. Thomas, and some of the Franciscan school, especially at Oxford, went as far as St. Thomas, if not farther, in their insistence on sense-experience as a requisite for knowledge. What St. Augustine did, as a writer has expressed it, was to interiorise philosophy. *Deum et animam scire cupio.* The secret of knowledge, the way of truth, lies within, and it is because this teaching lay so near to the heart of religion and found expression in so many of its greatest exponents, in St. Anselm and the school of St. Victor, that it needed much courage to challenge it with a cold and alien philosophy. Albert the Great, the teacher of St. Thomas, made the task easier because of his universal prestige and known orthodoxy. Nevertheless, what Paschasius Radbertus had written in the ninth century remained true in the thirteenth, "that to contradict St. Augustine is an act of impiety." St. Thomas had therefore to proceed very warily, and it is interesting to notice how willing he is to concede to his great forerunner whatever might be said in favour of his opinions. Where he is forced by truth to differ he does so with marked respect. He excuses weaknesses by remarking that "Augustine, who was steeped in the doctrines of the Platonists, took over whatever he found in their writings in accordance with faith, and corrected whatever was opposed to it."

He distinguished again in St. Augustine's writings between the theological and the natural. "Neither Galen nor Augustine had much knowledge of nature." On matters, then, of natural philosophy, it was reasonable to expect that his views might be at times superseded. But in theology he was glad to be able to make of Augustine not an enemy but an ally. A Platonist would say that Aristotle, like Dante's Vergil, will do very well as a guide for the nether world, but for the Paradise of theology the company of Plato and Augustine must be sought. More justly P. Mandonnet has said that "it is by this method and on this philosophical basis (namely, a combination of Plato and Aristotle) that Albert and St. Thomas reorganised the Augustinian dogma, thereby providing for it a firmer foundation and a more systematic arrangement."

§ 3. ARISTOTELIANISM

The victory of Aristotelianism in the thirteenth century marks the turning point in the history of Christian philosophy. The change had been prepared by writers like Alexander of Hales and the Franciscan school at Oxford, but it was accomplished by Albert and St. Thomas. It may seem strange that one of the greatest philosophers of antiquity had to wait so long for full recognition. There are, however, many reasons for this neglect. At the advent of Christianity the peripatetic school had declined and was occupied mainly in annotating the logical works of its founder. Much also of the genuine Aristotle was absorbed in the syncretistic thought of the period or converted into the prevalent system of Neo-Platonism. The Christian writers naturally found Platonism more suitable for their purpose, but fragments of Aristotelianism can be found in the Apologists, the school of Antioch

preferred him, and it may be said in general that cultured minds must inevitably have received something of his stamp.

The fourth and fifth centuries were chiefly interested in rhetoric and grammar, and the only metaphysical system which attracted adherents was Neo-Platonism. Then with the invasion of the barbarians came night over Europe. When under Charlemagne learning revived, the libraries were very scantily provided. Two possessions, however, helped to preserve continuity and stimulate culture. The first was the long memory of the Church. The bishops and monks were saturated with the Patristic thought, and it was this which enabled them to make so much of the poor resources at hand. When we recall that in philosophy up to the thirteenth century they had only the *Meno* of Plato, a fragment in translation of the *Timæus*, and a few commentaries, and of Aristotle only the logical treatises, we are bound to look beyond the slender material for an explanation of the quality of their thought. Now, as has been explained, the tendency of the Patristic age had been Platonic and Augustinian. Hence one main influence up to Albert was of this kind. But the second possession was of almost equal importance. Aristotle survived, not in his authentic writings, but in the commentaries of Porphyry (a Neo-Platonist, *c.* 232–300, who commented on the *Organon* of Aristotle as an introduction to Plato), Martianus Capella, Cassiodorus and Boëthius. It was they who transmitted not only some of the ideas of Plato, but also part of the logical treatises of Aristotle to the Venerable Bede, Alcuin and Raban Maur and others of the first tutors of the West. Thus it was that the logic of Aristotle crept in and that dialectic assumed the chief place in the schools and in the estimation of the leaders of thought. To Bede dialectic is the *magistra judicii*; Alcuin congratulated Charlemagne on his desire to study it, and in the tenth century there is the strange and

pleasant incident of Gerbert interrupting his work as Pope Sylvester II to solve a difficulty of Otto III in his reading of Porphyry. It is a passage, again in Porphyry, that started the celebrated dispute about universals, and so is in a way responsible for the rise of Scholasticism.[1]

Of the logical treatises only the *De Interpretatione* was known at first ; a little later came the *Categories*. Abelard declared positively that he knew only two works of Aristotle : "*Aristotelis enim duos tantum, Prædicamentorum scilicet et Peri-Hermeneias libros usus adhuc latinorum cognovit.*" Nevertheless, about this time other writers became acquainted with almost all the other parts of the *Organon*. The *rapprochement* between the Papacy and the court of the Greek Emperors in the first half of the twelfth century helped the spread of translations. Several Italian scholars busied themselves in translating Greek and especially Patristic texts, and amongst the translations were certain books of Aristotle, as the evidence of Robert de Monte shows : " James, a cleric of Venice, translated with a commentary certain books of Aristotle, namely, the *Topics*, the *Prior* and *Posterior Analytics*, and the *Elenchi*." Also, from indications in the *Metalogicus* of John of Salisbury, it would appear that he had before him a "*nova translatio*" by a " Greek scholar," who came from Severina in Calabria.

The growth, then, of translations, the love of dialectic, and the dispute over universals, gave Aristotle an influence which, if less resounding than that of Plato, nevertheless

[1] The passage is as follows : "Since, in order to understand the doctrine of the categories of Aristotle, it is necessary to know the meanings of genus, differentia, species, property and accident, and since this knowledge is useful for definition, and in general for division and demonstration, I wish to try, by way of summary and introduction, to deal with what the ancients have said about them. But I would avoid questions which are too profound, and touch only lightly on those which are more simple. For example I will refrain from stating whether genera and species exist in reality or only in the mind, and if they exist in reality whether they are corporeal or incorporeal, separate from sensible objects or existent in them and making part of them."

probably equalled it in effect. Gunzon of Novara, writing in the tenth century, asks: "Aristotle or Plato, which of the two should one trust the more? The authority of both is great, and one would have great difficulty in setting one above the other." We learn from John of Salisbury that there were plenty of peripatetics in his day, that Aristotle was regarded as the logician *par excellence*, and that owing to the discovery of the remaining books of the *Organon* it was felt that to be a great logician was also to be a great philosopher. Plato might still be *princeps totius philosophiæ*, but Aristotle was the philosopher *par excellence*. And somewhat later Alexander Neckam could write that "it is waste of time to praise the genius of Aristotle, as useless as to attempt to help the sun's rays with torches."

But the authority of Aristotle as a logician cannot suffice to explain his success in the thirteenth century and the loyalty shown to him by Albert and St. Thomas. By that time everything was in trim for a battle of philosophies. Abelard and his successors had cleared the ground by their skill in dialectic, and Peter Lombard had provided in the *Liber Sententiarum* an excellent textbook from which to start, and coincident with this came the discovery of Aristotle as a metaphysician, as the author of the *Physics* and *Metaphysics* and the *Ethics*. The greeting he received from the Church is at first sight surprising. Students were forbidden to read and professors to teach his philosophy. The reason for this is that the *Metaphysics* was introduced to Christendom chiefly under the auspices of the Arabians. To realise the enormity of this we have to remember two things: first, that in those days Christendom was self-contained, and as hostile to pagan thought as a Roland or Oliver to a paynim host. Secondly, this new Aristotle was an Arab brew. For centuries the Jews and Arabians in Syria, Egypt, and later in Spain had meditated and commented on him. St. Thomas profited by their

speculations, but their general trend was one with which no Christian philosopher could agree. Avicenna (980–1036) was the least antagonistic ; Averrhoes (1126–1198), on the other hand, taught that matter was eternal, that the heavenly spheres were intelligent, that the human intellect was numerically one, and that consequently individual men were not immortal, and he suggested the doctrine of the two truths. The scepticism contained in this suggestion and the general tendency to a kind of fatalism were utterly alien to Christian teaching and bound to provoke the suspicion and condemnation of the Church. In fact had the knowledge of Aristotle been entirely dependent on these Arabian sources, there would have been no chance of his success. Fortunately this was not the case. Historians are now able to trace a continuous process of independent study of the Aristotelian text. The Italian scholars had been occupied with Greek translations for some time, and besides them we know of others, like James of Venice and Robert Grosseteste. Albert, too, and St. Thomas quickly made up their minds to have their own translations of the original text. St. Thomas did not know Greek sufficiently well to do this for himself, nor had he the time, so he employed Henry of Brabant and William of Moerbeke to perform the task. He was thus able to present an orthodox Aristotle and challenge the interpretation of his enemies.

Before describing the clash of Arab, Augustinian and St. Thomas, it is necessary to say a word on the dependence of St. Thomas on Aristotle. That he adopted the peripatetic system as the basis of his teaching is clear, and whenever he can accept Aristotle's explanations of any point he does so. This does not, however, imply as much lack of originality as might be supposed. The method of treating authorities was different then from what it is now. As a Vergil could copy Homer and keep his genius and his reputation, so a medievalist could veil his thought

under great Greek names. By the standard of his time, as his biographers bear witness, St. Thomas was considered unusually novel in his views. He struck his contemporaries as the inventor of "a new method, new arguments, new points of doctrine, new order of questions, new light." And this is not surprising when we reflect that he broke with a tradition which, in the minds of some, was almost synonymous with Christianity, and made an alliance with what was supposedly Arabian. In itself it must be considered a *tour de force* to reset a system like that of Aristotle in terms of such a different view of life as that of Christianity. The latter had been worked upon by diverse thinkers for thirteen centuries, and anyone who wrote about it had to take note of this tradition and see to it that his views harmonised with what was orthodox, with the meaning of Holy Scripture and the disciplinary and spiritual life of the Church.

Moreover, we must not be misled by St. Thomas' deference to his Master, "the Philosopher." His mind was singularly unambitious and free from jealousy. Hardly ever do we find him depreciating a writer of the past or borrowing without acknowledgment. Hence, in estimating his debt to Aristotle or the pseudo-Dionysius or St. Augustine, we have to take into account an almost excessive modesty and courtesy. But neither in him nor in Albert did this courtesy approach hero-worship. Albert speaks with scorn of those who treat Plato and Aristotle as if they were gods, and St. Thomas says expressly that the reason for which he follows Aristotle is that "few or no inconveniences follow from his views." The secret of his own attitude is to be found in his saying that the study of philosophy does not consist in the knowledge of what men think, but in the understanding of truth (*De Cœlo et Mundo*, I, Lect. 22). He was quite aware that Aristotelianism had its limitations and dark side. Averrhoism was there to suggest it, and his opponents were not shy of

dinning it into his ears. Even his own friend, St. Bonaventure, could denounce the new Aristotelians as "followers of darkness."[1] This party argued, not without some reason, that there was no room in the system taken up by St. Thomas for a personal God. Wrapped up in himself, God could take no interest in the world—a world therefore without providence and without beginning. St. Thomas was not indifferent to these serious charges, as his writings show; he admitted certain errors and owned that "the argument from authority, based on human reason is exceedingly weak." If he adhered to the main principles of Aristotelianism then we are forced to conclude that he did so in the interests, as he thought, of truth.

§ 4. SCHOLASTICISM

Scholasticism is the name given to the form of philosophy which prevailed in the Middle Ages, and its character and methods were imposed on it by the circumstances and needs of the period, which stretches from Charlemagne to the thirteenth century. Before the coming of the barbarians the Græco-Roman culture had prevailed, and the Christian Church had been occupied for the most part with its own affairs and the development of its theology. Even when the Empire passed into Christian hands, the gloom hanging over a moribund society, the fall of Rome and the inrush of the barbarians had diverted the thoughts of great leaders, like Augustine and Gregory, from any constructive alliance. But at the end of the dark period, when Europe lay wasted, the only cultural influence existing was the Church. In so far as anything of the past remained, it was due to the efforts of missionaries, of bishops, and of the monks of St. Benedict. So far from standing aloof

[1] In *Hexameron Collatio*, VI.

from temporal concerns as of old, the Church had now the task of co-operating with kings and peoples in the building of a new order, social and intellectual. The work inevitably gave rise to new problems: in the social order, of the relation of Church to State, of Papacy to Empire; in education and philosophy, of the relation between faith and reason, and of the goodness of human life and the visible universe. As time went on natural reason began to assert its rights to philosophise, in connection with revealed religion indeed, but independently and according to its own proper rules. This was the genesis of Scholasticism. Then, as the world of human experience, of body and sense, of secular institutions and life, unfolded itself before these scholastics, they had to decide how this could be incorporated into the Christian scheme of philosophy. Owing perhaps to the fascination of novelty or maybe to a feeling that Platonists did not welcome "Mother Earth and Brother Fire, who is fair and joyous and mighty and strong," the majority decided in favour of St. Thomas, and the Thomist Aristotelianism became the most representative philosophy of Scholasticism.

For the beginning of this philosophic movement we have to go back to Charlemagne. Conscious of the evil plight of learning he encouraged study and invited the monasteries to open schools both for their own members and for externs. This good work was consolidated in the year 778 by the capitulary given to Bangulf, Bishop of Fulda, which recommended the foundation of monastic and cathedral schools. Moreover, the most famous scholars from abroad were invited to come and help, and by their means the cathedral schools were supplied with a number of competently trained professors or scholastics as they were called. These schools flourished and as they usually existed in a town, the guilds, which came into being in the towns about this time, provided a nucleus for a semi-university life. The first stage, therefore, was completed

with the organisation of youths in a guild corporation near to some prominent abbey or cathedral which happened to be furnished with a strong staff of teachers. After a while the fame of these teachers grew ; students gathered from the countryside, and later from far-off places, and gradually the medieval university came into being. Naturally at first the studies in most places pivoted round dialectic and theology, and to the end the name of University refers rather to the union of professors, masters and students, than to the number of faculties and breadth of the teaching. The main interest varied in different places : at Bologna it was law, canonical and civil ; at Chartres the bent was humanistic ; at Oxford more scientific. Paris remained the home of theology, and in time raced ahead of its rivals in fame and as the centre of attraction.

The beginnings of the future University of Paris were modest. The text of Porphyry, of which mention has already been made, had at length excited the attention it merited, and William of Champeaux lectured on it at the school of Notre Dame. By the novelty of his views on the meaning of the universal and the brilliance of his lectures, he drew crowds to listen to him. But he did even more for Paris by arousing the opposition of the youthful Abelard. Abelard has left us no clear system in his writings, and did his reputation rest on them alone he would rank as little more than an acute dialectician. But clearly his personality far surpasses the figure known to us on paper. His magnetic genius drew immense crowds to sit at his feet. Their numbers have almost certainly been exaggerated, but that they were vast can be gathered from the enthusiasm of Fulk de Deuil. " Rome sent to thee its children for instruction, far Brittany gave thee her own to educate ; the Angevins made thee homage of theirs. The inhabitants of Poitou, Gascony, Spain, Normandy, Flanders, Germany and Suabia ceased not to proclaim and praise the excellency of thy mind." Thus

it came about that Paris became the intellectual centre of Europe. From Abelard's death to the lifetime of St. Thomas its fame went on increasing, and many celebrated writers and schools can be numbered in its history. Philip Augustus put it under his special protection, and from Rome came guarantees and privileges.

At Paris, in the thirteenth century, the vast numbers of students were divided into four nations: the French, the English, the Normans, and a group which comprised the rest of the northern peoples and went by the name of the nation of Picardy. If report and song are to be believed, they were a wild assembly, "fonder of knives than knightly sword," ever creating disturbances in the streets, singing and drinking at night with torchlight processions, often desperately poor, and passionately interested in learning. Like the guilds they had definite masters whose lectures they were forced to attend for a certain period. The time though theoretically fixed, varied in practice. At the end of it the student was examined orally by three or four masters. If successful in this examination he had to submit a thesis and answer questions about it at an appointed time of the year. He then became a bachelor and pursued his studies on texts. Finally he was raised to the position of a master and began his teaching with a solemn inaugural lecture.

The type of education became uniform and the style of teaching traditional. In the Arts school logic was the principal study, and the *Sex Principia* of Gilbert de la Porree, the *Organon* of Aristotle, and a few other books were taken as texts. In theology the teaching was based on the Bible and the famous *Book of the Sentences* of Peter Lombard. St. Thomas, for instance, began with a *Commentary on the Sentences*. With our modern clear-cut divisions between the various sciences and science and philosophy, our established rules of procedure, our hard and fast methods of delimiting a subject, it is difficult to

realise how promiscuous and entangled was the learning of the early scholastics. A glance at the first *Summæ* will reveal an innumerable number of questions, biblical, theological, philosophic and scientific, naïve and profound, gathered together in what must strike the reader as a quite arbitrary arrangement. In process of time, indeed, subjects were shuffled into shape, and the sequence would have been easily grasped by a medieval student. Nevertheless, even for him the *Book of the Sentences* must have been a godsend. St. Thomas improved even upon Peter. The order he follows is definite and consistent and not too crowded with detail unimportant to a modern reader. But it would be too much to expect that he, who had to teach and suit his discourses to his audiences, should be free from the habit of mingling Scripture with philosophical analysis, St. Paul with Aristotle.

The methods employed in lecturing must be held responsible for the somewhat forbidding arrangement of his books into questions with articles. The articles themselves begin with a question, then a long or short string of objections (sometimes mistaken for the real answer by unwary readers), the deliberate statement of the true view, and finally a careful reply to each of the difficulties. This was the method in vogue and St. Thomas, in common with others, would have used the *Videtur quod non, sed contra* and *responeo dicendum*, when he began as a bachelor to teach in 1252, and after taking his licentiate with St. Bonaventure in 1256. The ever-increasing number of students who sat under him on straw mats while he expounded the Bible or Peter Lombard, were trained to this method and able easily to memorise by means of it. There was apparently no fixed time for stopping, and the professor could continue for several hours if his subject kept the attention of his audience. Besides the ordinary lectures there were formal and informal debates. The professor proposed a subject and named combatants for

each side. This practice, which still continues in Catholic seminaries, produced the *Quæstiones Disputatæ*. At the end the professor summed up and made a fair copy of his solution. These were then collected and published abroad. More solemn and public debates were held at certain seasons of the year, such as Advent or Lent. Crowds came from all the schools, and sometimes the Bishop of Paris or even the King, St. Louis, presided. The professor and his pupils took it upon themselves to maintain some thesis, *de quolibet*, against the world. Naturally the brunt of the attack fell upon the professor, and for days he might have to parry objections. When they were finished he summed up and his summaries were published under the title, *Quæstiones quodlibetales*.

It was in these circumstances and under these influences that Scholasticism acquired the status of a philosophy. At first religion and theology and philosophy had been taken together. Then Abelard and others claimed that a disinterested use of reason could not be prejudicial to religion, and so it came to be recognised that reason had its own proper object and end. A similar process was going on in other pursuits. In art the religious motif plays a great part throughout the Middle Ages, but the stress of that motif changes. Quietly the claims of art assert themselves, so that in the heyday of medieval life a picture or sculpture or building can be described both as religious and as a pure work of art. A picture by Giotto is an end in itself, even though the subject be to the glory of a St. Francis ; the *Divina Commedia* is pure poetry though its setting be the Christian after-life and its language in places almost a transcript of Thomist theology. In the same way Scholasticism, which had developed in the schools of Christian thinkers more theological than philosophic, emerged after a time into a system which, whatever its relation with the Christian faith, had a basis of pure reason. This combined purpose, in which both motives keep their

integrity, is most evident in St. Thomas. He cared with his whole soul for the faith and its message of union with God, and, nevertheless, he loved truth also and would not accept anything his reason could not approve. "Nothing," he says, "may be asserted as true that is opposed to the truth of faith, to revealed dogma. But neither is it permissible to take whatever we hold as true and present it as an article of faith. For the truth of our faith becomes a matter of ridicule among the infidels, if any Catholic, not gifted with the necessary scientific learning, presents as a dogma what scientific examination shows to be false" (*De Pot.*, I). Here he is principally the apologist of Christianity. In another place, however, he says, apropos of Job's dispute with God: "For man to dispute with God seems to be unbecoming because of God's superiority to man. But we should observe that truth does not change with different persons. Hence, when a man states what is true, he cannot be worsted no matter with whom he dispute" (in *Job*, cap. 13). The corollary from this is that St. Thomas would prefer to be read as a Christian philosopher, but that he is prepared to stand the test on his philosophy alone. Philosophy, that is, in the thirteenth century was always regarded by its Christian exponents as the handmaid of religion, but the handmaid was, by general consent, a very independent person.

In thus championing the claims of the intellect St. Thomas performed a very necessary and opportune work. In the age in which he wrote only a system based on reason could temper the prevalent mood. There was a fear then as now that tradition could not keep pace with discovery, that new ideas would sweep everything away. The Crusades had brought back booty for the mind as well as for the body, and Arabian and Jewish ideas were gaining ground in the universities. In the ferment of the new and the old, the younger minds showed a precocity which was alarming. The Church had set its face against

the *Evangelium Æternum* of Joachim and its followers, and stamped out the Cathari and the Albigenses. But it was not so easy to check and control the movements of thought which accompanied the rapid and enthusiastic acquisition of knowledge, and to hold the balance between the philosophy of nature and religion. Some form of alliance was necessary now that civilisation was Christian. Christians had to be citizens of two worlds; their occupations were acknowledged to be good and holy, and nature was revealing itself as a true work of God in the beauty which St. Francis hymned and the masons imitated in the capitals beneath the arches.

The philosophy which encouraged these tendencies, and nevertheless subdued them with the whip of reason, was the Aristotelian. The Church at first did not realise the service which that system could render, because of its Arabian associations, but when Albert and St. Thomas proved by deed that the suspicions were ill-founded, the Church became a convert. Thus it came about that just at the time when it was needed, a system of philosophy came into favour which joined together the physical and spiritual worlds harmoniously, depreciated all forms of illuminism, relied on sense experience, and proclaimed the exalting and disciplinary power of the human intellect. When we add that its chief exponent, St. Thomas, had the gift of working on a large canvas, and ranged through the whole Universe, invisible and visible, from the lowliest form of matter to the divine being, there can be no surprise that Aristotelianism became the successful rival of Platonism, and that the Thomist system impressed itself upon the age as the complete Christian interpretation of the world.

CHAPTER II

§ 1. LIFE OF ST. THOMAS

THE life of St. Thomas was comparatively uneventful, and he has not been so fortunate in his biographers as, for example, St. Francis of Assisi. He was born about the year 1225, not far from Naples, in the fortress castle of his family at Roccasecca. Aquino was close by on the heights looking down on the valley of the Liri through which the railway now passes. Not far off is Monte Cassino, the home of the Benedictine Order, where St. Thomas received his first education. He was the seventh son, and on both sides his family was illustrious. His mother, Theodora of Theate, was of Norman stock; his father, of the Lombard nobility and nephew of Frederick Barbarossa. In St. Thomas, therefore, North and South met, and their influence is visible both in his personal appearance and in his character and thought. He does not correspond at all with the conventional picture of an Italian. He is too big and heavy, too motionless. Yet the keenness of his mind and of his vision reminds one constantly of the clear-cut colours of his native landscape.

At the age of five he went to Monte Cassino and learnt the blessing of that Benedictine *pax* which he was never to forget. His parents seem to have been content with the prospect of his becoming a monk, on condition that he should occupy a position in the order worthy of his rank. Monte Cassino stood high in the estimation of the world, and if Thomas became abbot he would increase and not diminish the honour of his family. No doubt, too, the looting of the monastery by Frederick II in the preceding

year lay on the conscience of the parents of Thomas, and the sending of him there was in the nature of an *amende honorable*. Their plans were, however, frustrated by political events. The Count of Aquino was forced to remove his son from Monte Cassino when he was fourteen or fifteen years old, owing to the renewed attacks upon it by Frederick. He was sent to Naples to continue his studies at the Faculty of Arts. The course included mathematics, astronomy and music, dialectic and some study of classical authors, like Cæsar, Cicero and Seneca. We know next to nothing of his progress in these studies, and only one fact about his life. This is his entry into the Dominican Order. The Friars had recently set up a house of studies there, and almost certainly their white and black habit, their mode of life and learning, caused a stir in Naples. Thomas came to know them and in 1244, without any fuss, seemingly indeed unaware of the furore his act would cause, he took the habit. To arrogant feudal lords like his parents and cousins this choice of a new order, vowed to mendicancy, was insufferable. No benefices would come to its members, no honour to the family. Great pressure was brought to bear to make him change his mind; even the Pope, Innocent IV, was induced to interfere, and the startling offer was made of the Abbacy of Monte Cassino with the privilege of continuing to wear the Dominican habit. It was thought evidently that the youth had been dazzled by the external habit, but he remained obstinate and nothing could persuade him to change his mind. This persevering loyalty to an ideal despite many trials, long suffering, the anger and entreaties of his mother and family, and representations of the Pope, gives us surely far more precious information of his character than a fund of anecdotes.

Whether to remove him far from the sphere of influence of his family, or because of the promise of his intelligence, the Dominican General decided to take with him Thomas

and three other friars to Paris. His mother got news of this, took counsel with two of his brothers and determined to waylay the party. The good friars were stopped at a place north of Rome ; Thomas was seized and carried off on horseback to Roccasecca. The friars could not attempt a rescue—they were fortunate to escape scot-free—so Thomas was kept a close prisoner for more than a year and every means tried, short of violence, to shake his vocation. They even went so far as to introduce a young woman, dressed in the most alluring style, into his chamber. The effect was to stir the young giant, but not as they expected. On waking and seeing the girl, he snatched a brand from the fire, chased her out of the room, and then scorched the sign of the cross on the door. His other actions, if we can believe the chronicles, were less dramatic, and confirm the general impression of his character. He remained on affectionate terms with his family. His brother Raynald we know he always loved and after his death years later, he was comforted only by the hope that he died a martyr. With his eldest sister, Marotta, he had long and intimate talks, and in the end, instead of her persuading him to abandon his religious habit, he inspired her to become a nun of St. Benedict. Even his mother began to change her mind, and when she saw this placid son of hers reading the Bible and Peter Lombard, and carrying out his rule of life in the midst of the noise and fret and temptations around him, she took his side and helped him to escape.

He returned to Naples, and from there, on the first opportunity, went to Paris to the house of St. Jacques. His life of study now began in earnest and he had the good fortune to have Albert the Great for his teacher. The meeting of these two was momentous. Albert was already an Aristotelian and engaged on the task of winning over opinion to this system. St. Thomas needed just such an enthusiastic teacher of encyclopædic learning to stimulate

his genius and broaden his outlook. Without the inspiration of Albert he might have remained the placid and "dumb ox" his friends thought him to be. Albert knew better; Thomas became his beloved disciple, as dear to him in death as in life. For a contemporary relates: "In his old age, whenever Albert thought of Thomas in the commemoration of the dead, he used to weep tears, saying over and over again that Thomas had been the flower and glory of the world. So often indeed did this happen that his brethren were saddened, fearing because of the great age of the said Brother Albert that the tears were due to a weakening of the mind."

The biographers are silent about the effect of Paris on St. Thomas. It was already growing into the city beautiful, and the crowds of students from all parts of Europe made it a place of unique interest. But St. Thomas had not the temperament and tastes of a sightseer, and besides his religious life withdrew him from the world. Once, after he had become a master of arts, he was returning from St. Denis with some of his students and one of them said to him: "Master, how beautiful is this city of Paris!" "Yes, certainly it is beautiful." "I would to Heaven that it was yours!" "Mine! and what would I do with it?" "You could sell it to the King of France, and with the money build convents for the Friars Preachers." "Truly I should much prefer to have at this moment the homilies of St. Chrysostom on St. Matthew." The story may well be apocryphal but it rings true; true to the naïve admiration of a pupil for a great teacher, and to the character of that teacher (unless indeed we suppose that St. Thomas was laughing at the innocence of the boy, and suggesting that he would do better to attend more to his lessons). The incident belongs to a later period, as he himself was only a student during his first three years at Paris. In 1248 he accompanied Albert to Cologne, where

a new *studium generale* was to be instituted. The four years (1248–1252) spent there were important in his philosophical formation. Under the influence of Albert he threw in his lot with the new movement in favour of Aristotle. At first there are obvious signs of hesitation, and it is possible to trace during his life a growth in his ideas and in his confidence in the Aristotelian principles; but even in his first work, though the hand may be at times the hand of Augustine, the voice is the voice of Aristotle.

In 1252 he returned to the convent of St. Jacques to teach there as bachelor, and at the early age of thirty-one he was promoted to a mastership in theology. During these years he wrote his First *Commentary on the Sentences* and the *De Ente et Essentia*. This latter work is one of the most important for the understanding of his doctrine. A close acquaintance with Aristotle is manifest in it, and in particular, of the far-reaching consequences of his metaphysical principles. These principles are to be for him henceforth the one sure way of deciding the truth in any question. In the same treatise there appears the famous distinction of essence and existence. A suggestion of Avicenna had put him on its track, and so vital is the understanding of it for his thought that some commentators have declared it to be the one road of entry to his metaphysics.

Of his own methods of study we have illuminating evidence in a letter written by him to a novice who had asked for advice. "Since you have asked me in Christ, dear John, to tell you how you must study to attain a treasury of knowledge, I shall mention the following points of advice. Prefer to arrive at knowledge over small streamlets, and do not plunge immediately into the ocean, since progress must go from the easier to the more difficult. That is my admonition and your instruction. I exhort you to be chary of speech, and to go into the conversation room sparingly. Take great heed of the purity of your conscience. Never cease the practice of prayer. Love to

be diligent in your cell, if you would be led to the wine-cellar of wisdom. Ever be loving towards all. Do not bother yourself about the doings of others ; nor be familiar with anyone, since too great familiarity breeds contempt and easily leads away from study. Do not join in the doings and conversations of the worldly. Above all, shun roaming about outside the monastery. Consider not from whom you hear anything, but impress upon your mind everything good that is said. Make an effort thoroughly to understand whatever you read and hear. In all doubt seek to penetrate to the truth. Try always to store away as much as possible in the chambers of your mind. What is too far above strive not after for the present. If so be you follow these directions you will produce useful flowers and fruits in the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts, as long as you live. Do all this and you will attain what you desire. Farewell."[1]

This letter has a personal ring and fits in with what we know independently of his habits and methods. He was certainly no gadabout, and his silence almost makes itself felt in his writing. Gossip left him uninterested, and he was no collector of miscellaneous information. That he had a capacious and retentive memory is clear from the many quotations and references in his writings, especially in the *Catena Aurea*, a collection of passages on the Gospels gathered from the Patristic writers. There is a tradition that St. Thomas forgot nothing he had learnt, and when we consider the difficulty of consulting manuscripts and the meagreness of libraries, the tradition becomes credible.

No fact in the life of St. Thomas is more astonishing than that he produced thirty large volumes on the most difficult of subjects within a lifetime of forty-eight years. Hardly a moment of it can have been spent in idleness. Part of the day was spent in religious exercises ; he rose in the night for prayer, said Mass every morning, and was

[1] Quoted from Grabmann, *Thomas Aquinas*, p. 51.

present at another. On the evidence of his brethren he attended with great regularity the daily religious duties of his Order; the time left over he spent in lecturing, writing and dictating. It is said that he dictated to several scribes at the same time, and it looks as if this information must be true.

Such a life suited his genius, which was one that demanded quiet. In recreation with his brethren he was gentle and not talkative, and when he needed exercise he could be generally seen, an immense figure of a man, walking silently round the cloisters. His retiring ways could not, however, prevent his fame from growing. Not only did the religious crowd to his lectures, but students from all quarters of the city. It was noised abroad that his teaching was "novel in its methods," and in the light it threw on the old. St. Louis, who had so much at heart the fair name of the University, esteemed him highly and summoned him to dine at his table. It is of one of these meals that the well-known story is told of his fit of abstraction. He had been taken by the prior to dine with the King, on a day when he was busy with the *Summa Theologica*. In the course of the meal he forgot where he was and grew lost in thought. The others were in the midst of conversation when suddenly he struck the table with his great hand, crying: "Ha! that settles the Manichees." There was consternation; the prior jerked him by the shoulder, but Louis, who knew him, with royal courtesy called for a secretary to take down the thought lest it escape. Not only the King of France wished to learn from him; Hugh II, King of Cyprus, wrote to him for advice on the ruling of Princes, and the Duchess of Brabant consulted him on the proper treatment of Jews. Many in their difficulties wrote to him and put questions childish as well as serious. We have his answers to some of these, and they display extraordinary patience.

One asks him whether the names of saints are written by the hand of God in heaven to their honour, and in hell the names of the wicked to their dishonour. To this absurd nonsense St. Thomas replies placidly, if wearily: "For all I can see, it does not seem to be true, but there is no harm done in saying it." The demands made on his time by others were more serious, and as he grew older the reigning Popes applied to him or used him for important work they had on hand. Urban IV, for instance, set him to write the exquisite *Office of Corpus Christi*, and Gregory X sent him to Lyons to take part in the Council held there in 1274 to bring reunion between East and West.

No sooner had he begun to teach as a master in Paris than he found himself obliged to take part in a dispute which concerned his Order. It was the fate of this very pacific saint to be implicated in feuds almost all the time he taught in Paris. In this instance the trouble lay between the seculars and the regulars. The advent of the Preaching Friars and the Franciscans had caused friction. The seculars had some grounds for annoyance; as these two Orders enjoyed special privileges, their way of life was an innovation, and in the first flush of their existence they proved overwhelmingly attractive. William of St. Amour became the spokesman of the grievances of the seculars. He demanded that a check should be put upon the privileges of the Friars, and that each Order should hold at most one chair in the University. At first Rome inclined to his side. A war of pamphlets ensued. William, carried away by passion, attacked the whole theory of life of the new religious, denouncing them as precursors of Antichrist in his *De Periculis Novissorum Temporum.* St. Thomas replied in his *Contra Impugnantes* (1257), and the authority and cogency of the answer helped to turn the tide against William. Rome decided in favour of the Orders, the brochure of William was burnt, and he himself was dismissed from Paris by St. Louis.

So great became the reputation of St. Thomas in his Order that after three years of teaching he was summoned to a general chapter to assist in drawing up new constitutions for studies. The position of the Dominicans in Spain was also discussed at the meeting, and this drew the attention of St. Thomas to the relations there between Christian and Moor. This interest came to a head when Raymund of Pennafort asked him to write a book to serve for argument with infidels. St. Thomas produced the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, the nearest in scope to a modern philosophical treatise that he ever attempted The *De Veritate* also was written about this time (1256–59). It contains some of his richest thought ; his powers were then at their highest and his ideas fresh. Many of them reappear in the *Summa Theologica*, which is generally accepted as his masterpiece. But to some the earlier work has a perfection of the morning which is more refreshing than the full sunlight of noon.

The next few years were passed in Italy. The Popes recognised his worth and employed him at the pontifical court and on various missions. He was asked to write the *Catena Aurea* of the Gospels, a small work on the Errors of the Greeks, and an Office for the new feast of Corpus Christi. We should never have guessed from the prose works that St. Thomas had any poetical gifts. One looks in vain for purple passages, for picturesque phrases, for sudden and original epithets and images. His style seems in fact at first reading, just dull, good jog-trot prose. Judged by classical models the Latin is barbarous, and compared to that of an Augustine it is as a common candle to a smoky bonfire. This is a first impression, and it will be modified after much reading. Imperceptibly a personality will make itself felt in the style, moving along " with unhurrying chase " of his quarry. If the Latin be rough it is nevertheless turned into an adequate instrument of his thought. Indeed, he has so mated thought with

language that many have despaired of translating it into another tongue, and have declared that Scholasticism and Thomism are unintelligible save in Latin. But however much we may revise our verdict of his prose, we can never call it poetical. And—there is this to add—there are few signs in his writings that he held poetry, or indeed any art, in high esteem. And yet in the *Office of Corpus Christi* he composed a perfect work of literature. Not only does he show absolute certainty of taste in his choice of psalms and antiphons, but his own hymns are touched with gold-dust and of a rich and lasting texture. It is true that apart from the *Lauda Sion* he had models before him and freely borrows from them. Had he been no poet, such influences would have fettered him. But there is no labour apparent, no mosaic work in the opening strophe of the hymn of *Lauds* with its majestic and inevitable movement :—

Verbum supernum prodiens,
Nec Patris linquens dexteram,
Ad opus suum exiens
Venit ad vitæ vesperam.

Besides the works already mentioned, St. Thomas, during his stay in Italy, wrote commentaries on several of the books of Holy Scripture, an excellent *Compendium Theologiæ*, commentaries on the principal works of Aristotle, and started his immense *Summa Theologica*. For some time he had been meditating some such book, as the defects of the existing *Summæ* were obvious to him, and in his reading he had gathered together all the materials for a complete statement of Christian theology. His long study of the Aristotelian philosophy made him sure of the principles to apply to the mass of theological doctrines and literature, dogmatic, traditional, probable and improbable, which lay before him. In the *Summa* he contemplated, God would hold the supreme place, and all else, angels, man and nature, would be ranged according to certain

metaphysical principles in a natural and supernatural order by their relation to him. The work was never completely finished. What remains has been often described. St. Thomas in the preface indicates its purpose, namely, to present the contents of the sacred science briefly and clearly to beginners, and he modestly quotes: "As unto little ones in Christ, I gave you milk to drink, not meat." The "little ones" must needs be lusty young giants if they are not to be choked by the milk of the *Summa Theologica*! What no doubt St. Thomas meant was that the *Summa* could serve as a primer or introduction to the wisdom of thirteen centuries of Christianity. His contemporaries and successors judged the work more highly than its author. Already in Dante it is Thomas of Aquino who quenches the thirst for knowledge of the pilgrim as he mounts the stairway to the highest heaven. The medieval mind looked out on life and saw it as a quest. The Crusades were one expression of this spirit, the songs and "high history" of the Grail another. It was in keeping with this spirit that the medieval students greeted the *Summa* as the map of the highroad to truth.

In 1268 St. Thomas was called back to Paris. A crisis had arisen there which demanded his presence. His own views were being compromised by the spread of an Aristotelianism which was not his. Under cover of an attack on this the traditionalists threatened to destroy the positions which he and Albert had built up so patiently and inoffensively. Now or never the orthodoxy of the Aristotelian principles had to be vindicated. At the beginning of the Aristotelian movement, in the thirteenth century, the Church resisted it. Its sponsors were pagan, and if their interpretation were true, then many of its doctrines relating to God, the soul, and Providence could not be reconciled with Christian teaching. The first step was taken by a provincial council at Siena in 1210. The use of Aristotle's books on natural philosophy was for-

bidden, and no professor was permitted to lecture on them. In 1215 the *Physics* and *Metaphysics*, and summaries of them were banned by the statutes of the University of Paris. The legislation certainly did not have its desired effect, as Aristotle continued to be read; but what is at first sight astonishing, the great Albert is to be found actively promoting the new philosophy. It was a daring policy on his part, and can be explained only on the supposition of the connivance of the Church authorities. They were content, it seems, to allow a responsible theologian to sift the true from the false, the while they acted as the stern guardians of orthodoxy and morals.[1] Albert met with considerable opposition even among his brethren, and so he must have regarded his new pupil from Aquino as a godsend. The two joined hands and went steadily ahead. Their first duty was to procure an unadulterated text. This is the reason why St. Thomas set his scholar-friends to undertake translations, while he himself brought out commentary after commentary on the works translated. The policy was wise. The translations took away the excuse that Aristotle could not be read because of unorthodox influences, and the commentaries were as a gauntlet thrown down before his adversaries.

These adversaries, as P. Mandonnet has proved, were very powerful. It is not easy, nevertheless, to be sure of the disposition of the various factions, regular and secular, Dominican and Franciscan, Augustinian, Averrhoist and Aristotelian. When St. Thomas first went to Paris, he encountered the dispute between seculars and regulars. Later a quarrel of a different kind arose between Masters and Chancellor. St. Thomas tried to stand aloof, but when the Dominicans refused to join the strike, they made

[1] This view is borne out by the fact that a commission was formed in 1231 with the object of expurgating errors from the text of Aristotle. The work was never completed. New translations and the success of Albert and St. Thomas made it superfluous.

enemies once more of the seculars. There existed then a strong party feeling against the Friars. The Friars again were divided, and this division is complicated by the fact that some Franciscans were enthusiastic Aristotelians, while some of the brethren of St. Thomas were violently opposed to him. The view put forward by Renan that Averrhoism found its chief supporters among the Franciscans is now discredited. The majority of them were of a mind with St. Bonaventure, that is to say, Augustinians, and opposed alike to St. Thomas and the Averrhoists. For them St. Thomas had nothing but respect. The real and dangerous foe to his mind was the Averrhoist party, led by Siger de Brabant. Siger has always been the mystery-man in the piece. He professed to be a genuine Aristotelian and orthodox, and apparently was sincere in his claims. His sincerity, however, only made his views the more insidious if they were wrong. No orthodox philosopher could accept the doctrine of the two spheres of truth, the eternity of matter and the unity of the intellect in all men. St. Thomas thought such views to be bad Aristotelianism as well, and for the sake of all that he had taught and loved was deeply concerned to show that they were counterfeit.

The growth of this Averrhoist party had not passed unnoticed by the Church. In 1263 Urban IV renewed the prohibition of Aristotle. He most certainly had the Averrhoists in mind, because St. Thomas was his personal friend and living with him at the time in Italy. Siger's influence does not seem to have been much affected by this prohibition. Forces, however, were coalescing against him, and in 1266 some trifling criticism of his teaching led to a general conflagration, in which Aristotle seemed likely to be the holocaust. St. Thomas hastened to Paris and proceeded immediately to define his own position and meet the school of Siger. He took as the subjects for lectures the controverted questions of the nature of the

soul and pure spirits. He vigorously defended the regulars against the old charges in a treatise, *De Perfectione Vitæ Spiritualis*. He made it quite clear to the traditionalists that his own teaching on the Aristotelian lines was orthodox. "If the holy Doctors of the Church deliver divergent opinions on matters which have nothing to do with faith or morals, then the hearer can, without risk, follow one or other opinion. For he can then apply to himself the words of the Apostle, 'let everyone abound in his own sense'" (*Quodl.*, III, a. 10). But it was the Averrhoist party which drew his fire. For a moment the equable saint felt the call of battle in his Norman-Sicilian blood. In his *De Unitate Intellectus contra Averrhoistas* he denounced them vigorously, ending on a note like to the trumpet-call in the list of knights. "Behold our refutation of the error. It is not based on documents of faith but on the reasons and statements of the philosophers themselves. If then anyone there be who, boastfully taking pride in his supposed wisdom, wishes to challenge what we have written, let him not do it in some corner nor before children who are powerless to decide on such difficult matters. Let him reply openly if he dare. He shall find me there confronting him, and not only my negligible self, but many another whose study is truth. We shall do battle with his errors or bring a cure to his ignorance."

This passage-of-arms with Siger de Brabant became celebrated, and the scene of it is represented in many works of art at Florence, Pisa, and in the Church of S. Maria sopra Minerva in Rome. The most striking of all is that by Benozzo Gozzoli in the Louvre, where St. Thomas stands over Siger like a St. George conquering the dragon. This artistic version of the story is true to fact. In 1270 thirteen propositions of Siger were condemned by the Bishop of Paris. This bare statement does not convey the significance of the act. We have to remember that Tempier, the bishop, was a thorough-going

old conservative, and therefore very reluctant to distinguish between a Christian and an Averrhoistic Aristotelianism. He had, moreover, no great love for the new religious orders. It was then a hard-won, if decisive victory which St. Thomas gained. Many of the Friars thought he had chosen the wrong weapons with which to attack the Averrhoists, and shook their heads over the eternity of matter. To conciliate them he wrote his *De Æternitate Mundi*. The hardest test came at the season of the *Quodlibeta*. The seculars pressed him with objections against the privileges of the Friars; the Augustinians with difficulties against the eternity of the world and the unity of matter and form. John Peckham, who was a zealous Augustinian, so far forgot himself as to upbraid St. Thomas in a long and intemperate harangue. St. Thomas, we are told, remained calm and always courteous; he answered every objection, and at the end of the day returned to his convent "even more tranquil in soul than in his words." His one object had been attained. Aristotelianism was freed from the associations of Averrhoism and became part of the orthodox Christian philosophy.

The condemnation of Siger did not end all dispute, but the mission of St. Thomas in Paris was accomplished. He continued to write, and for a time such occupation proved welcome after the noise and tumult of debate. But when in 1272 he left Paris for Italy to reorganise studies in Naples at the request of Charles of Anjou, a reaction set in. The strife had worn him out, and the memory of the disputes left perhaps a bitter taste in his mouth. The truth which he had sought all his life seemed now to be desecrated by the dialectic in which he had just been forced to take part; and the life of prayer and contemplation absorbed all his love. He ceased writing. Reginald, the companion so very dear to him, implored him to take up his pen again. "I can no more," said St. Thomas, and when his friend insisted, he said again: "I cannot; such

things have been revealed to me that what I have written seems but straw." In 1274 Gregory X sent word that he wished for his presence at a council summoned at Lyons. Mounted on mules, Thomas and Reginald set out. They stopped on the way to visit the saint's sister in Campania. There Thomas grew so weak that further journeying, save to another world, seemed out of the question. He begged to be taken to the Cistercian monastery of Fossanuova near by. The monks tended him with love and reverence, and, at his wish, they read to him as he lay dying the *Song of Songs*. When they brought Viaticum to him he broke into tears and prayed aloud: "I receive Thee, ransom of my soul. For love of Thee have I studied and kept vigil, toiled, preached, and taught. Never have I said word against Thee." He died on the 7th of March, 1274, at the age of forty-eight or forty-nine.

His death did not end all controversy round his teaching. For a short while its opponents even gained the upper hand, and both at Oxford and at Paris his followers were stigmatised as Averrhoists. At Oxford it was a fellow Dominican, Kilwardby, who set the example of hostility both before and after his accession to the see of Canterbury. In Paris Tempier, the bishop, managed to include some of the favourite doctrines of St. Thomas in a list of one hundred and nineteen theses condemned by him as unorthodox. But the reaction was only temporary. The position of St. Thomas was secure, and to judge the impression left behind him at Paris we have only to turn to a letter sent by the University of Paris after his death to the Dominican General Chapter at Florence. In this letter the University makes a formal petition that the remains of St. Thomas should be brought back to Paris for their final resting-place. "Since we would not be thought ungrateful to the memory of so great a cleric, so mighty a father and doctor, we humbly beg, in the loving affection of our hearts, as a special boon, that, as we could not have him restored to

us when alive, now that he is dead, his remains may be given back to us by you. Unfitting is it that any other nation or place than the city of Paris, the most illustrious of all the schools, which trained, nursed and fostered him, and afterwards received in return food and most precious nourishment, should hold and guard his remains. For if justly the Church honours the bones and relics of saints, not unreasonably does it seem to us proper that the body of so great a doctor should be held in perpetual honour, and that the lasting memory of one whose fame lives among us by his writings, should also be for ever fixed in the hearts of our posterity by his tomb."

§ 2. CHARACTER OF ST. THOMAS

The writings of St. Thomas tell us little or nothing of the private history of their author. They are as anonymous as the architecture of the period. One carries away, nevertheless, an impression of serenity and spaciousness and cannot fail to mark the absence of self-advertisement, of envy and rancour. He seems always to be willing to learn and quote from others; he is generous even in his criticisms; he is at peace with himself and with all who seek the truth. It must be confessed that this extreme modesty makes him dull reading. To meet a quotation from St. Augustine, for instance, is like the sight of a silver trout in a clear stream. He could never have imitated the *Confessions* or written the diary of a Marcus Aurelius. His psychology is not drawn from personal observation and he has little to say on æsthetic emotion. Even the mystical life of contemplation is treated metaphysically, and what from other sources we know must have been his personal experience is kept in the background or hidden away in dissertations on grace, the state of

BOSTON MEDICAL FEB 12 1931

Adam, and on the prophets or his favourites the angels. In one place he almost betrays himself, but hastily tries to efface the impression by referring to the authority of a Hugh of St. Victor in such high matters.

In his first official lecture as master at Paris he developed the text : " He watereth the mountains from his chambers ; the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy work." It is not fanciful to see in this text the directing thought of St. Thomas' life, God, and his goodness and grace ; and strangely, the saint does make us think of a mountain, so big and passive is he—though we can feel at times the movements of the giant within. His appearance was like his character. When he was out for a walk with his brethren, folk passing by would stop and point out the towering bulk of one of them as Fra Thomas of Aquino. There are many portraits, and almost all agree in general features and form. To the saintly Fra Angelico he is saint and angel of the schools—large, smooth-browed and serene. The face in the picture at Viterbo is more lifelike ; it is rather heavy, and intellectual. All show him to have been tall and corpulent. All, again, of the records and biographies suggest a very gentle giant, unambitious and preoccupied with thought and prayer ; a man without guile, easily deceived in human affairs and ever ready to forgive. The nickname of the " dumb ox " must have had its foundation in truth, and it is easy to slip into the mistake of regarding him as a simple-minded philosopher, inattentive and forgetful and out of touch with life. We have to correct this impression by recalling that by blood and temperament he was lordly and fearless, that his mind was very direct, and that his fits of absorption came from over-concentration and not lack of control. He was sufficiently observant of facts and events, and could give wise and broad-minded counsel to all manner of folks, from kings to novices. In his religious life he is said to have been very punctual and regular, habits which

are almost impossible for wool-gatherers. His superiors evidently esteemed him a man of practical wisdom, as they chose him several times to organise houses of studies, and successive Popes turned to him for help in their projects.

What remains true is that he had little or no interest in worldly matters. He refused the offers of high ecclesiastical offices. Shortly before his death, when journeying to Lyons, Reginald said to him : " You and Fra Bonaventure are going to be made Cardinals, and that will redound to the credit of your Orders." The answer of St. Thomas is of a piece with his life : " Never shall I be anything in the Order nor in the Church. I could not serve our Order better in any other state than the one I am in." He separated himself deliberately from much that he had at heart. We hear little of the affairs of his family, though its vicissitudes in the struggle between Papacy and Empire must have won from him many a prayer ; we hear scarcely anything of affairs of State, and it was only perforce that he had to take sides in the disputes at the University of Paris. Yet he had a tender family feeling. He was visited by visions of his dead sister, the Benedictine abbess, and he dwelt long and affectionately over the memory of his brother Raynald, slain at the hands of Frederick II. His companions evidently loved him, and their affection was returned. He dedicated his *Compendium Theologiæ* to " Brother Reginald, most dear of companions." When the same friend had been cured of a fever on the feast of St. Agnes, he desired the convent at Naples to celebrate the occasion annually by a festive repast for which he would pay. Again, his friendship with Albert reads like a medieval romance : how Albert defended him in his shy youth and prophesied his greatness, stood by him living, fought for him when dead, and shed tears whenever he recalled his image.

But all these traits fall within one setting—sanctity.

The medieval world revered him as a saint and canonised him. "While he lived," said his companion, Reginald, "my Master forbade me to mention the wonders which I witnessed. He owed his knowledge less to the effort of his mind than to the virtue of his prayer. Whenever he wished to study, argue, teach, write, or dictate, he always had recourse first to hidden prayer, beseeching God to find in the truth the divine secrets; and the effect of this prayer was such that, whereas before it he lingered in uncertainty, he returned from it with his mind enlightened." He is described as "*miro modo contemplativus*," and there can be no doubt that in the interior of his soul he lived with God and experienced mystic union. As Tocco, his biographer, declares, "his gift of prayer passed all measure. . . . He scarcely passed a day without being rapt out of his senses." These ecstasies became so common as to pass almost without notice. In the silence of the convent meals he became so lost in prayer that he knew not what was put before him, and in the night he spent hours in the contemplation of the loved Object of his work and life.

There are many heroic types in the thirteenth century: St. Louis, the representative of justice and kingliness; St. Francis, the poor man of the Gospels. St. Thomas stands out in that age as the embodiment of wisdom, of a wisdom which springs from the root of Christian virtue. The belief that interior holiness is essential for wisdom is not exclusively Christian. It is shared, for instance, by Plato, and is exemplified in the life of a Plotinus. But whereas Plotinus sought for self-emancipation in a One beyond all being, St. Thomas looked—where Augustine and Anselm and Francis of Assisi had looked—to a Wisdom which is personal, to a Logos which is incarnate, and it is this ideal which colours all his thought and conduct. The domains of philosophy and Christian revelation are distinct, and the truth of St. Thomas' theories can be studied apart

from his religious beliefs ; but no true and proper appreciation of the man is possible unless we bear in mind his ideals and longings. The truth which he sought by philosophy was open to his embrace by a higher and surer way, and there came a time when all that he had laboriously pieced together by thought seemed to be but as straw compared with what had been vouchsafed to him by grace. There is a story told in his *Life* of how one day before Matins the sacristan saw him in ecstasy before a crucifix. A voice appeared to come from the image, saying : " Thou hast written well of me, Thomas ; what recompense wouldst thou for thy labours ? " And St. Thomas answered : " Nothing save thyself, Lord."

There could be no better summary of his character and life's work.

CHAPTER III

MIND OF ST. THOMAS

All systems of philosophy are affected by the environment of time and place in which they were written, and Thomism is no exception to the rule. I have said that St. Thomas kept himself, to an exceptional degree, aloof from the national and political events of his period. The same aloofness was not possible in the contending worlds of thought. To be an Aristotelian he had not only to measure swords with the pagan and unorthodox interpreters of his Master, but also to shield himself against the reproaches of other Christian philosophers more conservative than himself. Fortunately, for a fair and adequate appreciation of his views there is no need of a complete knowledge of those of his opponents. Once the basic principles which govern all his thought are understood, his chief works make fairly easy reading. The difficulties which arise will come, not from lack of knowledge of his references, but from other sources. To assist readers, I must mention these difficulties and try to dispose of some of them.

The first arises from the unbroken continuity in his thought between philosophy and Christian dogmas. Those unacquainted with the latter may be baffled and irritated by his habit of passing from a reasoned argument to an example from Scripture or the Creed, from men to angels, or from immortality to the nature of Heaven. This coalition of philosophy and religion belongs to all the *Summæ* of the epoch, and is indeed so characteristic of it that St. Thomas never thought of breaking with the custom. He combined together two purposes, one to exercise his

reason in order to know and tell the truth, the other to relate the Christian religion with its thirteen centuries of life to the best formularies which reason could devise. A saint of the most energetic period of the Middle Ages, he is essentially and by choice a Christian philosopher. That is not to say, however, that his thought is valuable only to fellow-believers or inquirers into the Christian faith. In theory he keeps the two domains apart, and his philosophical arguments have no other basis than reason. The commingling, therefore, of theology with philosophy is at worst a hindrance, and never an insuperable difficulty; and for all readers the result should prove historically interesting as one of the most famous *concordats* between philosophy and the Christian religion.[1]

Next, the note of confidence noticeable in all of St. Thomas' writings must not blind the reader to the fund of scepticism in his attitude to knowledge. Many of his statements belong to theology, and are guaranteed by revealed dogma. When he is discussing a subject from pure reason, it will be found that he is all the while relying on certain philosophic principles, and by those very principles a limitation is set to human knowledge and its power to comprehend reality. On many topics he writes in a serene tone which is deceptive. We have to

[1] For a bird's-eye view of the order which St. Thomas follows in his treatment of subjects it is useful to consult the *Compendium Theologiæ*. It is much shorter than the *Summa Theologica*, and the somewhat complicated numbering of the parts in the latter is avoided. Usually students of philosophy begin with the *Summa contra Gentiles*, and as many of the subjects in its table of contents are treated again in the *Summa Theologica*, it is a useful practice to make cross references and supplement the accounts given by further reference to works like the *De Veritate*. The *Summa contra Gentiles* has been done into English in one large volume by the Rev. Joseph Rickaby. Unfortunately through exigencies of space and because to his mind the translation of certain parts, especially those dealing with scientific theories, served no useful purpose, Father Rickaby has cut out or cut down a number of chapters. The English province of the Dominican Fathers have been engaged on a complete translation, and as I write this they have completed their work. As the translation was unfinished when I wrote the text I have where possible used that of Father Rickaby.

remember that it was the accepted habit of the time to fill up gaps in knowledge with plausible reasons which were understood to be nothing more than stop-gaps. If this cause surprise, it will be well to recall that the mediæval schoolmen had a strong hierarchical sense. They loved analogies and believing that the highest was manifested in various degrees in every sphere of reality, they were not afraid of filling out what was wanting when demonstrable proofs had been exhausted. *Symbolica theologia non est argumentativa* (symbolical theology is not meant to prove). Reason may be reinforced by a lighter kind of suggestion *ad consolationem fidelium*; χρὴ τὰ τοιαῦτα ὥσπερ ἐπᾴδειν ἑαυτῷ, as a modern interpreter of St. Thomas has quoted from Plato. The same may be said with qualifications of the attitude of the best minds towards the science of the day. The arguments of St. Thomas are supported by constant reference to supposed scientific facts, and there is not the slightest doubt that he shared many of the naïve beliefs of his contemporaries. It would be too much even to assert that he always kept the provinces of science and philosophy clear, and refrained from resting arguments on false scientific theories. At the same time it is also certain that he was aware of the provisional character of much science, and skirted its treacherous sands when he wished to establish a truth definitively. He had no reason, for example, to doubt the Ptolemaic astronomy; nevertheless he puts in quietly the *caveat*: "if it be true"; and in another remarkable passage he says that "the hypotheses of the astrologers are not necessarily true; in employing them they seem to explain the facts, but one is not forced to believe that they are right; perhaps some scheme which is still unknown to man can serve to explain all the appearances in the stellar universe."

The close connection in so many more modern philosophies of empirical science with the premisses of their arguments

makes for a misunderstanding of St. Thomas on this point. There is need to insist on two features of his philosophy, the one common also to his contemporaries, the second more peculiar to himself. The first is that philosophy is not concerned primarily with the exact analysis of isolated truths, but with order and system. St. Thomas is nothing if not systematic; his aim is to survey and construct, not fancifully or like the poet creatively, but by reproduction in terms of unity and by understanding the nature of objects in their ultimate causes. The philosopher differs, therefore, from the ordinary man in this, that whereas the latter has a number of conceptions which he holds to be true, with a scheme more or less vague uniting them, the former introduces order and organises the scattered bits into a whole or *corpus* of knowledge. His ideal is unity—to see reality penetrated through and through with form. The more he approaches this ideal, provided that he keeps contact with the world of objects and experience and avoids the temptation to hasty generalisation, the more does his thought systematise its findings and correlate them by principles which are objective and in no way hypothetical. This is the way truth dawns upon the human intellect. Shadows must indeed remain and regions unexplored. The experience which would exhaust the universe in one synoptic glance is beyond the range of philosophy, as St. Thomas understood it. The universe is not of its nature opaque, and is in fact comprehended totally and undividedly by God, who measures its truth by his creative act, as an artist determines the meaning of a picture in the expression of his inner vision. On the other hand, the mind of man is measured by the world outside himself; he has to learn and sort and arrange his impressions, and out of the manifold of experience, with the help of certain principles and discovered laws, catch sight of the unity pervading all. But at the end of the process the difference between the knowledge of man and that of the Divine

Artificer is marked by a gulf wider far than that which separates Shakespeare from a child who casually reads *Macbeth*. The disproportion, however, is not fatal. St. Thomas concedes willingly the lowly estate of the human intellect and the vanity of certain kinds of speculation, but modest as he is he maintains a position radically different from that, for example, of Kant. The one pulls down the shutters on the window looking out on the fields of reality, the other confesses that the window is glazed, that he sees through a glass darkly, but denies that there is any final and impenetrable impediment to a knowledge of the world as it is in itself.

This distinction brings out the second characteristic of the philosophy of St. Thomas. It is conspicuously a system compact and all-embracing, and the masonry has the hard white quality of reason. In contrast with friends, like St. Bonaventure, for instance, and many another philosopher, he relies so far as is possible on reason and reason alone. That is why he has been named an Intellectualist. His favourite saying was: "*si quis a vero discedat, hic non intelligit*," and he many times scandalised opponents and friends by his recourse to reason in spheres which they thought closed to it. He takes sides, therefore, in the age-long quarrel between those who cherish experience, mysticism, love or life as in some way superior to reason, and those who trust only the lamp of the latter in a night where all else may prove to be illusion. We shall see later that St. Thomas is not so inhuman as to exclude the factor of love in his philosophy of life; his dislike is reserved only for those who put "the reasons of the heart" before those of the head; but for the moment it is necessary to emphasise the intellectualistic strain in all his compositions. He seeks in every problem to take the experience and place its ingredients in the crucible of reason, and in his view reason finds its best employment in the department of metaphysics. We must expect, then, to meet

one who is coldly indifferent to the world of emotions and imagination except in so far as they subserve his purpose, a metaphysical account of the contents of reality. He could never have made a novelist or essayist after the fashion of Montaigne, never, like Kant, have rested satisfied with an ethics cut off from metaphysics. He begins where a pragmatist or Bergson ceases. To begin to criticise is to affirm implicitly the rights of reason, and reason once affirmed carries the critic with it into its kingdom of metaphysics. The modern assertions of a God discovered not by proof but by religious experience would not, therefore, have contented him as they stand. In his own day he rejected the ontological argument devised by Anselm because, as he thought, an objective basis in reality was lacking to the argument. Even his ideal is presented as intellectual and not in terms of love. Love, if it be of a true quality, is begotten by knowledge. Knowledge makes for intimacy, and its supreme ardour is contemplative. Perfection, therefore, is to be sought in the intellect and not in desire; the latter presupposes that one has not yet the beloved object in a close embrace; possession belongs to the intellect, rejoicing that it is one with the other for whom the soul has longed. "In short there must be a mind, which, while it feels the beautiful and the excellent in the beloved as its own, and by right of love appropriates it, can call Goodness its playfellow."[1]

It must not be thought, however, that St. Thomas was unaware of the weaknesses of an extreme rationalism. The wrecks of so many ancient systems gave cause for reflection and counselled humility. The story of Abelard and his encounter with St. Bernard was still a living memory, and besides, the Christian religion taught very definitely the truth of mysteries inaccessible to reason. To understand his position we have to put side by side

[1] S. T. Coleridge. Introduction to *The Improvisatory*.

such texts as: "whenever the reason is in error, no matter what the source, it can be corrected by arguments of an opposite kind"; "demonstration is a reasoning process, the steps of which are necessary; lack of truth is impossible in it, and it is by this process of reason that the certitude of knowledge is acquired." And, on the other hand, *necessitas rationis est defectus intellectus.* "The intellect and the reason are not different powers, but they are distinct as the perfect from the imperfect"; "the intellect means an intimate penetration of truth, the reason, inquiry and discourse." There are, then, forms of knowledge which are higher than that of reason, and the latter is related to intuition "as the circumference to the centre, time to eternity." Hence St. Thomas held that the chart drawn by the human mind could be true, but that there might be places and persons not discoverable by it; and even if their existence were inferred or revealed, their nature might remain hidden. It is true that at times he seemed to forget this fact and set too much store by his abstractions, that he neglected experience and stretched his deductions too far. Nevertheless he is very well aware, on the whole, of the precise strength and weakness of the human mind, as will be seen later, and his analysis is of great value because it does enable us to some extent to find a law in the rise and fall of philosophical systems. If his account be true, then it is to be expected that mankind will move from an over confidence in an absolutist philosophy to a pragmatic or sceptical view, and shift from materialism to idealism and back again. Thus a perspective of human speculation is opened up and a suggestion about the nature of reason and its temptations can be tested by history.

It is in accordance with his intellectualism that St. Thomas extols the virtue of wisdom. *Sapientis est ordinare*; the philosopher seeks to penetrate to the ultimate sources of reality, to understand the why and wherefore,

and to rest only when he has found necessity. The word *intelligere*, St. Thomas likes to think, is derived from *intus legere* (to read below the surface). The world is for him intelligible ; let it then render an account of itself. The modern scientist is concerned with departments of it which he examines in isolation and by special methods, but the philosopher is interested in one question alone ; he asks, namely, what are we bound to say of any object that it should be intelligible at all ? Were it not ambiguous we might state the same in the words, What are the necessary conditions of thought ? The phrase will pass muster if we remember that for St. Thomas necessity in thought and necessity in objects go *pari passu*. In his philosophy it is the world of objects which has meaning and is therefore intelligible. Consequently if he finds that he is forced to introduce a distinction in the contents of his experience, in order to render that experience intelligible, he holds that distinction to be objective and not merely logical.

If we wish to know what is the fundamental and common structure of reality we must begin our inquiry with " being," find out what it entails, what are its laws, and what is the unity contained in it compatible with all the multitudinous differences that immediately strike us. Thomists, it should be noted in passing, generally use the word reality as synonymous with being, and distinguish in " being " between what is possible and actual or existing being.

Such an investigation, it need hardly be said, must necessarily be of an abstruse and abstract character. The glass of water which the scientist may use in his experiments can be seen and touched ; the microscope will reveal many more wonders, and even the abstract laws employed in or inferred from observation and experiment can be verified in a way to appeal to the senses. The senses, on the other hand, are of little avail in metaphysics.

The subject matter is the intelligible as opposed to the sensible, and all images—though we cannot dispense with them—tend to be misleading. Many a problem in philosophy has for its sole source this confusion between sense and thought, *aistheton* and *noeton*. To St. Thomas the distinction is vital. He is ready to concede that man must represent what is intelligible by the help of the senses, but on condition that he be aware of the transmutation that is going on. To work out the meaning of reality in mathematical terms would be an error in point. Another example would be the use of the word " idea " in certain systems of philosophy. In these systems, words like " image," " impression," " representation," are used as equivalents for the idea, and it would seem that idea means little more than a superior image. St. Thomas often enough employs the same language, but he is not duped by it—and it is important that his readers should not be duped by it. He is expressing what is intelligible and understood as such in terms which illustrate his meaning by analogy. In various places he supplies all the necessary corrections, and so by image, analogy and subtle qualifications, he is enabled to convey to his readers a theory of knowledge befitting one who was a wholehearted believer in the intellect and its superiority to sense.

One other example. The explanation by causes occupies a large part of his system. A reader may object that the conception of cause is now in the melting-pot, and that the scientific philosophers are attempting to do without it. The answer is that the scientific philosophers and St. Thomas are speaking of different things. Cause as used by the former belongs to the world of phenomena, which can be observed and treated by experiment. It has always been an interloper in the world of the empiricists, bounded as their horizon is by sense. For St. Thomas cause is primarily a metaphysical conception forced on the mind in its contact with experience. The philosopher is bound

to ask of reality that it should be intelligible, and on the strength of this to inquire without ceasing what kind of a nature each object must have that it should manifest itself and behave in the way that it is doing; secondly, what it is that explains how the object has come to be and is what it is, and thirdly, what is the purpose which gives a reason for its existence and behaviour. These three questions resolve themselves into the old distinction of the formal, efficient and final causes. Consequently St. Thomas holds that causality belongs to the very fabric of reality, and is a necessary conception for any philosophy, and is, moreover, presupposed in every form of scientific study. Once, however, this is admitted, he is prepared to allow that we must go very tentatively in science in assigning particular causes and in our use of the word cause.

These examples may help to show the nature of metaphysics and its methods of procedure. There are truths we can discover by experience and only by experience, and there are truths presupposed by all experience, without which we could not have any experience at all. This second group belongs to the province of the metaphysician. He has to analyse what must be if any experience be true, and he relies only on the general character of reality, working therefrom by a process of deduction with the help of the principle of contradiction. The dangers of this method are obvious, and in the decline of the Middle Ages they were only too apparent. But abuse is possible also in the opposing experimental method, and in neither should it blind us to the value of a proper use. St. Thomas is less open to this charge of abuse than many others. His theory of knowledge committed him to a regard for experience, and in most matters he does not run ahead of it. Metaphysician as he is, he likes to fall back upon his first principles as to an inviolable sanctuary, but he limits their scope, and, as said already, he is exceedingly modest

about the pretensions of human knowledge. Where he remains adamant is in his assertion of the need of a science of "being" and the application of its principles. We cannot start from nowhere and find a place and a home, and we cannot start without truth of some kind and discover it with the help of probabilities (if probability have any meaning without reference to truth to measure it) or falsehood. Such a view resembles the child's answer to the question, how God made the universe: that he found first a stone to sit on and then created the world.

The chief topics which St. Thomas includes in his metaphysical inquiry will be discussed in a future chapter. As, however, they never cease to offer difficulty to beginners, an explanatory note will not be out of place here. Reality, or being, is the field of investigation. Now everything is a being, but an ant is not a pillar and a speck of dust is not a sound or colour. This gives rise to the celebrated problem of the one and the many. How explain the differences when the same title belongs equally as it seems to all, and how grade them in relation to each other? The difficulty is that it is impossible to find some standard of measurement which does not itself fall amongst the things to be measured, some variation which is truly a variation. The wrong way out of the difficulty is to look for something which will lie outside the ample notion of being. There can be no such thing. Another answer beside the mark is to posit four original elements or electrons, or electrons and mind, and say: "Behold! the problem is solved." The solution has not even been begun. Faced with this problem, St. Thomas decided that the answer must lie below the level of being, within it, so to speak; that beings must differ according to their hold on reality, by the degree in which they recede from or approach to change and loss of their reality. This led him to accept the distinction of Aristotle, of potency and

act, as necessary if thought is not to be involved in contradictions. Once recognised, it became the vertebral column of his system. The Thomist *sans peur et sans reproche* takes this distinction and applies it rigorously; it becomes the shibboleth separating the true from the false follower. Excellent as this method is, I have not used it because it pre-supposes a knowledge of St. Thomas which readers may not all possess. Keys that open all doors in philosophy are naturally viewed with suspicion.

Nevertheless, the better students of St. Thomas learn to appreciate this distinction and its henchman, matter and form, the deeper will they penetrate into his thought. Unfortunately there are no illuminating synonyms in the English language to make the conceptions easier. Determinable and determinant has been tried; innate capacity and realisation bring out an aspect, or again strength, power, ability in exercise, but to use these expressions safely we have to deepen and modify their sense. They are not to be thought of as the two halves of some real object, slices, as it were, which are themselves complete. They are not themselves objects so much as necessary objective conditions which have to be present in every object that comes to be and might pass out of being. They are, therefore, metaphysical conceptions, *sine quibus non*, of any knowledge of reality and pre-supposed in every branch of science, though the scientist know nothing of them.

The lid of reality or being is opened, then, by means of potency and act, and a series of degrees of reality is drawn up on the principle that the more a being is act and free from potency the higher it is in the scale. Matter and form take their place in the scale at the bottom end. Now that he has a host of different kinds of beings, St. Thomas goes a step further and shows that unity persists amid the difference. His conclusions are summed up in the word analogy, the doctrine of which may be considered

to be amongst his most important contributions to thought. Just as his theory of potency and act enables him to avoid the extremes of monism and an unmitigated pluralism, so too the doctrine of analogy, as he works it out, guides him on a middle path between agnosticism and anthropomorphism.

The remaining subjects of his metaphysics are sufficiently obvious once they have been declared. Everything is in some sense one, true, good, and perhaps beautiful; hence they are discussed together with being. Cause again, as a fundamental notion without which being is unintelligible, finds a place here; and St. Thomas accepts the Aristotelian classification into the four causes, the material, the formal, the efficient, and the final. Lastly, he accepts also from Aristotle the famous division of reality into the ten categories, and so a discussion of substance, quality, quantity, relation and so forth follows on the general analysis of being.

Such, then, is the scheme of the metaphysics. A grasp of the principles contained in it will be of inestimable advantage for an understanding of the system of St. Thomas. If, however, one wishes for an easier approach, his conception of man or of God may be recommended. St. Thomas has drawn with exceeding care the status of man, as it seems to him to be, with its weakness and strength, its height and lowliness. He looks to experience and argues from his metaphysical principles, and by both methods he comes to the same results, which thus most interestingly confirm one another. In the philosophical chart, man is the meeting-place of two worlds; his nature is multiple and multiplied in countless individuals; he is mind and body united together in most intimate union, as matter and form, so as to produce but one nature. As such he has all the cravings of an intelligence for absolute truth and goodness, he is in revolt against the limitations of his organism, and yet he finds the world of experience

and sense congenial to him. He asks for wisdom, and philosophy tires him; he seeks intuitive enjoyment, and the travail of body and mind generate only a concept, so that he has to find consolation in the *mimesis* of art, the contemplation of what is sensible. When he possesses what he wants, the body tires and tedium makes him turn to novelty. Quality, too, by the law of his being, is ever fading into quantity, the ideal into its sensible image, and philosophy is debased to a mathematical and physical science. Even morality, which should show forth the unchanging good, is in the composite creature, man, affected by his moods and emotions and lower passions; in fact they must provide the material of virtue and give it specific names. Such is the condition which St. Thomas would argue from his principles must belong to a being on the confines of spirit, composed of matter and mind. Now when leaving metaphysics, we turn to experience and try to draw conclusions about the nature of man from history and literature, there is, as is plain, a striking confirmation of what has already been deduced. I need not dwell on the lesson written across poetry and music. In history there is a flickering torch of truth in a world of changing shadows; something absolute standing fast and testing fashion and art and science, conjectures and beliefs, and giving meaning to progress. Man changes this torch from right hand to left hand, he blows upon it or lets it almost die out. He oscillates from pride of intellect to despairing scepticism, from belief in an intelligible world open to his understanding to a dark materialism. There are common and undying beliefs and myriad prejudices; logic never quite fits facts, and the absolute standards of morality are made relative by ever-varying circumstances. Minds differ in strength according to brain, inheritance, and environment. We witness almost a Heracleitean flux in fashion, taste and movements of art and politics. The list, indeed, of examples is unending which would go to

show that the picture of man which St. Thomas draws in philosophy is so like to the original as recorded in history that it cannot be very far from true. It is because this thirteenth century philosophy—an epitome of Græco-Roman thought, of twelve centuries of Western experience and the wisdom of the Jews—presents us with what looks like an authentic likeness of human nature, its strength, and its burden of weakness, that it has still its admirers and a school of disciples.

St. Thomas himself would have preferred to think of his philosophy as first and foremost theocentric. To see its proportions understandingly it is best to fix attention on his theology. Once his metaphysical conceptions of the existence and nature of God are understood, the remainder of his views are seen in clear perspective. His theory of creation, of the relative autonomy of man, of time and space, of evil and good, of reason and desire, are pieces in one whole. Like so many, if not all, metaphysicians he was absorbed in the problem of the absolute and the relative and the contingent, and of that unity which allows of so much, at least apparent, variety. In his system all is subordinated to God, but without loss to finite value and independence. All moves out from God and returns to him, but not in the simple way that one might imagine. God is left intact in his perfection. In giving he is left unspent, and indeed he cannot be multiplied; he is immanent in all that is, and his immanence is such that whatsoever is real keeps its integrity and can be treated without reference to its relation to its Creator. A plant or an animal can be understood by the scientist without theology, because both have distinct natures and a substantial existence. There is a relation, nevertheless, between God and all else, but it is a relation which does justice to both terms; both are left integral, and yet for that very reason the unity subsisting between the two is the most perfect and the most complete. St. Thomas

does not hold the doctrine of one substance or subject with many attributes or adjectives. Time and space and freedom and human personality are not for him illusion or just " moments " to be superseded. Even the suggestion of an organic unity is unacceptable, because an organism is defined by and confined to definite natures which are finite and particular. All such unities and unifications would have seemed to him procrustean, and to neglect both the rich variety of experience and what must be the essential nature of God. Therefore in his system we find that all is subordinated to God ; God abides as pure act, complete in himself ; he makes all else to be without diminution of himself and without essential addition to himself. He is not in a process, he does not become, but by an act of superlative charity he can give existence and intrinsic worth to what could not exist without him. Like a divine Pygmalion he makes a living form.

In accordance with this view St. Thomas does not seem to have recognised any special difficulty in reconciling God's causality in creating and conserving, with natural causes and free will. The coincidence of God's act with that of nature and man does not spell conflict. They are in different orders, and both are left complete and distinct. This explanation helps St. Thomas to solve the problem of evil. The act in so far as it is positive, while wholly man's, is maintained by Divine causality. God is the author of being, but he is not responsible for that in the act which causes it to fail in fulfilment, to cease to be what it ought to be. Consistently again St. Thomas does not favour the theory of St. Augustine that our power to apprehend truth comes from the Divine illumination that " enlightens every man that cometh into the world." The human intellect has its own natural power, and is therefore to that degree autonomous ; even conscience is the voice of practical reason and valid for its intrinsic evidence, not because it is the command of an external authority.

Lastly, God is the end as well as the beginning of all that has come into existence, but again this has not to be understood in any mean and simple way. How God is the end can only be learnt in detail by experience and by study of the particular nature and end of all of the objects that we know. They reach out to God according as they reach their own perfection or excellence ; that is to say, that again there is no conflict between nature and God, between what is intrinsic and what might seem to be external. At the level of mind, however, there is a difference. In the interior of the soul God initiates the movement of the will in desire and crowns it. Man searches amid passing joys and finite good his ultimate happiness. All that he meets on the way is a participation of perfect goodness and truth with its own intrinsic and finite worth. It is at this point that St. Thomas rejoins St. Augustine. For his journey over the earth he had taken Aristotle for his companion. Now that he begins to ascend to the Paradiso he calls upon St. Augustine. It is at this point also that the thinker and saint meet in the Christian philosopher. The text of St. Augustine, " that our heart is uneasy until it rest in Thee," is taken up into his own saying, " that by the very fact that the soul is made in the image of God it is capable of God by grace," and developed as follows in the *Summa contra Gentiles* :

" Nothing finite can set at rest the desire of intelligence. Given any finite thing, intelligence always sets to work to apprehend something beyond it. But the height and power of every created substance is finite. Therefore the intelligence of a created spirit rests not in the knowledge of any created substances, however excellent, but tends still further in a natural desire to understand that substance which is of infinite height and excellence, namely, the divine substance. . . . Hereby it sufficiently appears that final happiness is to be sought in no other source than in activity of intellect, since no other desire carries so high

as the desire of understanding truth. All our other desires, be they of pleasure or of anything else desirable by man, may rest in other objects; but the aforesaid desire rests not until it arrives at God, on whom all creation hinges and who made it all. Hence Wisdom aptly says: I dwell in the heights of heaven, and my throne is in the pillar of a cloud; and it is said, Wisdom calls her handmaids to the citadel. Let them blush therefore who seek in basest things the happiness of man so highly placed."

PART II

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF KNOWLEDGE

§ 1. TRUTH

THE views of St. Thomas on knowledge differ from those of many modern philosophers in that he did not consider a critique of it indispensable at the beginning. Idealism had not been born, and not till Descartes do we find the method of doubt employed. Like other thinkers of his time he accepted experience, the world, and a distinction between thought and that world. Fortunately we are able, however, to find scattered about his writings enough data to formulate a theory in answer to modern questions. He admits that we should begin with doubt. "As that science (metaphysics) is concerned with the general consideration of truth, therefore to it also belongs general doubt about truth." [1] But this doubt is not the same as that of Descartes. The latter professed to doubt about all until he discovered one truth which would defy scepticism. St. Thomas means only that we ought to test everything, even the first principles to see if they are true. He does not hold that there is only one first indubitable truth; there are many truths, and it is impossible to doubt them or suspend our judgment while searching for some more ultimate truth.

One amongst such truths is that we know reality. He belongs, therefore, to what is called the dogmatist tradition in philosophy, and he holds in one sense that the so-called problem of knowledge is a false problem. Knowledge

[1] In *III Metaph.*, Lect. 1.

cannot be justified by anything else save knowledge and in its act it possesses its own justification.

From this first position he proceeds to realism, and this once established he builds thereon his whole metaphysic. His argument is in the Aristotelian mould.[1] It is of the very nature of the intellect to know the real. The object of knowledge cannot be a creation of the mind nor just a subjective representation ; to suppose the latter is to deny the objective validity of the sciences, and, what is decisive, to deny the principle of contradiction. If what I think at the present moment is wholly relative to me, then what my friend is thinking of may be the precise contradictory of it and yet equally true. Thus a certain form of realism is given as self-evident in the act of knowledge, and this can be shown by a *reductio ad absurdum* of any other standpoint. But it may be urged that what so far has been established is very little. A sceptic might deny the principles of contradiction and identity, and, even granted their truth, they do not take us beyond the position of, for instance, Kant. Validity in thought is consistent with almost any system of philosophy, idealist, subjectivist as well as realist. St. Thomas has little difficulty in disposing of universal scepticism. He shows that we are forced to affirm, and whether we affirm knowledge or scepticism, or try to withhold judgment, we are making a statement about what is and can be, and in that statement the first principles are necessarily applied. Nor again can these principles be laws of the mind and not of reality. Quite apart from the fact that, as someone has written, they " declare not only an unthinkableness, but an impossibility," it can be shown that for the principle of contradiction to be true for the mind, it must also be true for reality. The reason is this, that if once I conceive the possibility that there is a reality in which circles might be square, appearances not appearing, thinking not think-

[1] Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, q. 85.

ing, then my own thought also may be possibly contradictory, and that is scepticism once more.

The principle of contradiction and knowledge of reality, therefore, go together. Usually St. Thomas does not bother with arguing this. No one, he says, "can assent to the thought that he does not exist; for in the very act of thinking he perceives that he exists." For him the whole problem is concerned with this being which is revealed to thought, and though he has much to say on the nature of our knowledge, his views are as much dictated by metaphysical principles as by an analysis of the act of knowing. In every affirmation we affirm something; it is a declaration about the nature of reality, about what is or can be or cannot be; again, in every judgment the truth of the principle of identity or contradiction is also affirmed. In every judgment we can at the least say of any object before the mind that it has being; it is not nothing and is identical with itself. Even what we commonly call nothing must *be* in some sense and fall under the law of identity and so be only relatively nothing. "It is impossible that nothing could have eve existed." What we know first and always is being; in a vague and confused way at first and then more determinately, but never as anything other than being. In the next chapter we shall see more in detail what this means. To illustrate at the moment St. Thomas' theory of knowledge, however, it is worth pointing out how he speaks in an equivalent way of the certainty of truth, being, and first principles in pithy sayings, such as: "*Veritatem esse in communi, est per se notum; Illud quod primo intellectus concipit quasi notissimum est ens; Interimens rationem sustinet rationem.*"

We have seen that the intellect knows being, that its affirmations about it are true, and that the first laws of being are to be found in the principle of identity and contradiction. From this foundation St. Thomas

builds up his philosophy. It may seem very little on which to found so much, and it shows us how near he was to agnosticism. He is only saved from it by his profound conviction that however vaguely and abstractly and imperfectly reality deploys out before the mind, it is nevertheless the nature of what is or can be, and we have one law at least of its nature, namely, identity. Whenever, then, he is in distress or uncertainty, he tests the content before him by this law and rests all natural knowledge on what he shows must necessarily be in metaphysics. All other sciences and beliefs are departmental and are affected by the limitations of sense, by partiality and prejudice, by what, in his technical language, is called matter. They are, to some extent, relative, and can be guaranteed only by some absolute measure. In the notion of being the mind grazes the absolute and learns the first law of what is and is intelligible. This is enough to go on with, because with the principle we are able to bring order into the intelligible world revealed to us under the one transcendental notion, as he calls it, of being. We have to find out what are the conditions which all the forms of reality must fulfil if they are not to be contradictory. Here is to be found the ground of his explanation of movement, of potency and act, and essence and existence. These and other distinctions are forced on the philosopher if he is to render experience intelligible.

A certain likeness can be detected between the aim and method of St. Thomas and those of Hegel. There are, however, also remarkable differences. For St. Thomas it is impossible that contradictories should exist together, and again reality and intelligibility correspond, but a thing must first be to be intelligible. The real includes both the actual and the possible. Whatever we can think of without contradiction is possible, and the possible presupposes the existence of something actual and obeys the same fundamental laws ; but St. Thomas lays far too

much emphasis on the need of evidence and experience for him to allow that what is intelligible must necessarily be actual. This is one of the reasons why he does not accept the ontological argument of St. Anselm. At the same time he can justly be described as a stout advocate of the supreme importance of the intelligible, and he would regard those who confined knowledge to the sensible and made little of the abstractions of the intellect as not even novices in philosophy.

§ 2. REALISM

The mind, then, is aware immediately of what is not itself under the universal notion of being, and at the same time is made conscious of the absolute truth of the principle of contradiction. Whatsoever is affirmed is, and therefore all our judgments would look as though they affirmed the same thing, being. A naïve philosophy might stop there and deny any differences in being, calling them, after the manner of Parmenides, illusory. The other extreme would be to say that by the word "being," or the copula, "is," we meant nothing. St. Thomas, following Aristotle, admits that there is a unity, but holds that we predicate being of objects in diverse ways and with various titles. The problem, therefore, turns into this, how can the unity of being be exhibited and at the same time its diversity without contradiction? This is a metaphysical inquiry and not a logical one. All the objects of our knowledge have to be rigorously co-ordinated, with the help of the first principles, into a system containing what has being *par excellence* and by derivation, and showing the relations and distinct nature of being and becoming, essence and existence, substance, accident, and relation. That there must be such a system can be deduced

from the fact of diversity in the object of our knowledge, and the further fact that every single judgment implies something absolute. No truth can be private and relative. Once we know one solitary fact, then we know also that it must be a fact for no matter what intelligence, and that every other possible fact or truth must accord with it. But all these distinctions and divisions of being fall on the object side of knowledge. It belongs to a much later generation to ask the question, how can I pass from the logical order or content of experience to the real? No such question vexes St. Thomas. In his view the bridge is crossed in every affirmation. That is why his time and energy are given to metaphysics or as it is now sometimes called, ontology, and not to any so-called theory of knowledge.

One great problem, however, remains to be faced before leaving this subject. From what has been said it might be supposed that the intellect grasps reality directly, by a kind of intuition, that there is nothing between the object and the knowing subject. Now the language of St. Thomas is directly opposed to such a view. He is certainly a realist, but on a first impression he would seem to hold a correspondence view of truth not far removed from that which is associated with the name of Locke. If this were so, then what has already been written would have to be considerably modified. The problem of the relation of the content of consciousness to the real would have been laid only to rise again like a vengeful ghost. The language in question, of which there are innumerable examples, is of the following kind: "Knowledge takes place according as the known object is in some way in the subject knowing." "All knowledge is through some form which is the principle of knowledge in the knower." "All knowledge is attained by the assimilation of the knower to the thing known, in such a way that the said assimilation is the cause of knowledge; as sight by means of the form of

colour perceives colour. In its relation to the mind, being must first of all correspond to the intellect: this correspondence it is which is called the adequation of mind and thing; and it is in this that the meaning of the word 'true' is formally given. This, then, is what is conveyed by the word true when applied to being, a conformity or adequation of the thing to the mind; and, as has been said, knowledge is the consequence of this conformity." [1]

These passages show that there is some form of correspondence between the mind and reality. Reality can be called true because it can be known; that is to say, the only reason we apply the word true to stocks and stones is because they can be known to be stocks and stones by some mind. Again, from the side of the knowing subject, the object must actually be known, that is, terminate and perfect the activity of knowing, belong to the knower, for there to be knowledge or conscious truth, if the expression may be forgiven. This does not, however, involve any crude correspondence view of truth. St. Thomas holds the view, at first sight paradoxical, that knowledge is direct and nevertheless by means of concepts. In answer to the objection that "the thing understood is in the intellect which understands," he maintains that "it is the stone (an example taken from Aristotle) which is understood, not the likeness of the stone." In the *Summa* he explains his doctrine more at length. After having rejected as utterly false what some have asserted, "that our intellectual faculties know only the impression made upon them," he proceeds: "therefore it must be said that the intelligible species is related to the intellect as that whereby it understands; which is proved thus. There is a twofold action, one which remains in the agent, for instance, to see and to understand, and another which passes into an external object, for instance, to heat and to cut; and each of these actions proceeds in virtue of some

[1] *Sa Theol.*, I, q. 66.

form. And as the form from which proceeds an act tending to something external is the likeness of the object of the action, as heat in the heater is a likeness of the thing heated, so the form from which proceeds an action remaining in the agent is the likeness of the object, hence, that by which the sight sees is the likeness of the visible thing, and the likeness of the thing understood, that is, the intelligible species, is the form by which the intellect understands. But since the intellect reflects upon itself, by such reflection it understands both its own act of intelligence and the species by which it understands. Thus the intelligible species is that which is understood secondarily, but that which is primarily understood is the object, of which the species is the likeness."[1]

This passage makes clear in what sense conformity is to be understood, and it contains in short what St. Thomas repeats in many other places. There is, first, a favourite distinction of his between transient and immanent actions. As will be explained later, thinking, because it is an immanent action, must be terminated by a concept. Secondly, the species or form or likeness is not known primarily; it serves as a medium *quo* or *in quo* the real object is apprehended. There is no question, therefore, of a comparison of a likeness first known with an original. We know the original, and it is in a reflective act that we are aware of the medium which is the form. The word conformity brings out the relation between the real object and the form, but it does not imply two distinct objects of experience before the mind. "It is immediately that one sees, for example, a stone, though it is thanks to the internal power of the mind and the determining aspect of the thing that one is enabled to see. Sight is not concerned with the conditions of its seeing, as if they themselves were visible things, but by means of these intermediaries, thanks to these conditions, it is con-

[1] *S. Theol.*, I, q. 85.

cerned immediately with the visible thing which is before the eye."

Two questions arise immediately out of this statement; first, if there is this conformity between thought and thing, how are we certain that we know reality, or in other words, that we are judging truly? and secondly, why does St. Thomas insist on these intermediaries as necessary? The answer to the first question is given in a classical passage from the *De Veritate*. There he appeals to reflection as the witness and guarantee of truth. In sensation there is an awareness not only of the sensible object but of the sensation itself. This is not, however, more than a beginning of reflection, for the reason which Avicenna had given, that sense cannot perceive save through a bodily organ. Truth " belongs to the mind and is known by the mind, because it reflects upon its act; and this reflection does not consist merely in the knowledge of its own act, but in the knowledge of its conformity with the real. Now this cannot happen unless the very nature of its act be known; and this again cannot be unless the very nature of the principle at work be known, which is the intellect itself, whose nature it is to be conformed to the real. Therefore, it is in so far as the intellect reflects upon itself that it realises its truth."[1]

There is a difference of opinion among commentators on the meaning of the word " reflection " in this passage. Cardinal Mercier and others seem to hold that it refers to a second act succeeding the first judgment which takes the first for its object and examines its credentials. Apart from the fact that this makes the theory very dubious—as it seems only to throw the problem a stage back and give to the second judgment a certainty denied to the first—it

[1] *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 9. The intellect knows itself and knows its nature, which is not to create but apprehend reality truly. Our particular certainties are guaranteed not by any general criterion, but by the objective evidence in each case.

is opposed to the obvious sense of St. Thomas' words. What St. Thomas surely wishes to say is this, that as opposed to sense, the mind is aware of what it is doing. Truth is first and foremost a perfection of the subject knowing, and since it belongs to the very nature of the mind to be conscious of its acts, and consequently of the proper and specific perfection of them, it follows that truth is apprehended in the very act of judging. The knowing subject judges truly because he is aware that he is thinking of reality as it is. Nor is this a roundabout way of saying that we know reality immediately, and there is an end of it. We know reality because we know that we are thinking truly of it. Some conformity is implied, though it is not the correspondence theory as ordinarily understood. Thought cannot be the reality, yet it is possible to think of reality and to be aware at the same time that one is thinking truly. This means that one is conscious of thinking without confusing it with the real object, and when one knows that one's thought is true, there is the awareness both of its conformity with reality and of reality's conformity with the thought, and all this in one indivisible act.

§ 3. CONCEPTS AND JUDGMENT

It is in accordance with this analysis that St. Thomas places truth formally in the judgment and not in sensation or concepts. These two enter into judgments as elements, that is to say, they can be distinguished in the judgment, not as anterior bits of knowledge put together, but as separable within the one act in which truth is found. By a very natural fallacy they tend often to be regarded apart from judgment as knowledge already constituted or as incipient knowledge, and then the analytic judgment is set

up as the pattern type. It analyses what we already possess as knowledge, though in a confused and general way. St. Thomas, on the other hand, holds that every judgment is, in the post-Kantian sense of the term, synthetic. He describes judgment as a putting together, or separation. " Those things that we know by themselves and separately we have to unify by means of synthesis or division in making an assertion." There is never tautology. When we say that what is, is, we are really asserting that what is—as such—cannot not be. Now the notion of not-being is posterior to that of being, as negation depends on what is positive and not *vice versa*. Hence, even in the example of the principle of identity, the predicate is not something taken from the subject so as to make tautology, but is something new attributed to it.

The decisive reason, however, for the synthetic character of judgment appears in the very act and statement of judgment. It is of the general type, that A is B. Now, though the real object is AB we know it in the assertion that A is B, which can be amplified into it is true that A is B. This latter mode of statement brings out the identity and difference between the real object and the real object as known. In the one indivisible act of judgment the real object is known for what it is, namely AB, but it is known in the assertion that my thinking A and B to be one is true. No doubt if the human mind possessed an immediate and synoptic vision of all reality and were not on a continual voyage of discovery, there would not be the need of this synthesis. But in St. Thomas' view we are dependent on experience, on sensation and concepts which are in themselves neither true nor false. It is only when the intellect takes up an attitude towards these aspects and affirms reality in terms of their unification that we have knowledge or truth. It knows the real world as it is but in its own human and roundabout way. In the direct judgment it is the real object which is predominantly

before the mind, it is in reflection that the mode in which one knows becomes conspicuous, and, let it be said again, it is not by a correspondence between the two that truth is known, but by the power of the mind to know its own act and to be able to judge when it is functioning properly or truly.

It is because of this synthetic mode of operation that the human mind may make mistakes, and can recognise the imperfection of its nature. St. Thomas sets reason in the lowest rank of intellectual activity, and always writes as though there must be higher modes of knowing. This may cause difficulty, as it may be asked on what grounds he is justified in holding that there is a higher form of knowledge than the one we possess. Either it is unknowable or else we already enjoy it. On any theory of immediate apprehension without qualification, or again on any crude correspondence view, it would indeed be hard to defend the position. In the first case we should know the real object and we could not possibly criticise our knowledge by some other kind of evidence from the real world. On the correspondence view we could detect the imperfection of the image only by some independent apprehension or intuition of the proper nature of the original. St. Thomas, as we have seen, holds neither of these views. He holds that we know reality directly and yet that concepts play a part, and he appeals to the nature of the intelligence in act for his proofs. It is of the very nature of the mind to know itself in judging, and so to know truth or its own perfection, and the degree of perfection reached.

This will be made more clear if the answer to a question already raised is given, to wit, why are intermediaries necessary for knowledge? One answer to this is contained in the analysis of knowledge just given. In the very act of judgment there is an awareness of the rectitude or probability of what we are thinking, and this must

mean some kind of distinction between reality and our thought of it. Further reflection only confirms this. Our thought develops while reality does not change, or at least, let us say, the changes in nature do not coincide with our processes of discovery. The *modus rei*, that is, may not be the *modus inventionis*. Our thought is often enough descriptive, and while exact, by no means complete and exhaustive. Again, whatever exists is particular, while the concept is universal. Certainly the particular is of such a nature that we are justified in predicating the universal of it. Individual men are men because of their humanity, but our concept, humanity, as such, belongs to thought and not to the actual world outside our mind. There is implied here a special theory of universals, but nevertheless a simple inspection of the content of our knowledge does seem to reveal an important distinction between the real as it is in itself and the real as it is known by us. There is some skein obscuring the vision of the mind. No being possessed of intellect can fail to grasp what is other than himself, and so to arrive at truth. That does not prevent human nature from showing its workmanship in its act of knowing. Human knowledge depends upon the experience of the senses : *nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu.* Now the senses cannot take us beyond the sensible order ; they are intuitional so far as they go. But the mind craves for an intuition of essences, and it has to explore this intelligible world through the appearances presented to it.[1] The province of being which belongs by right to the mind has to be determined further by what is furnished to the mind, with the help of sense. The synthetic operation which is the result bears a certain likeness to that described by Kant. " Thoughts without content are empty, and perceptions without concepts are blind." The all-important difference is that for St. Thomas the mind has not forms of its own

[1] Cf. *De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 6, ad 2.

but knows reality by its sensible appearance or aspects. " It is natural for man to come to the intelligible through the sensible. . . ." " From what is apprehended by the sense the mind is introduced (*manuducitur*) to what is beyond. . . ." In short, then, we have to assert the need of concepts because of the absence of intellectual intuition. Man does not possess any intuitive knowledge of things or persons ; he learns by experience and reasoning on his experience, and his ideas are always universal, in that they are applicable to any instance which may fall under the same species. Sense provides him with individual differences, and so it is that his judgment is always synthetic and his knowledge of reality always by means of concepts.

§ 4. ACT OF KNOWING

There is, however, another and final reason why St. Thomas devotes so much time and thought to concepts, a reason which, if understood, throws a flood of light on his general philosophy. His theory of the concept is a fascinating one, and it has been strangely overlooked in modern philosophy. This is all the more surprising, because the outlines are to be found in Aristotle, and one short saying of his epitomises the whole doctrine : *ἡ δε τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ ἐνέργεια καὶ τῆς αἰσθήσεως ἡ αὐτὴ μέν ἐστι καὶ μία.*

Unfortunately, owing to the association of words like truth, forms, representations and concepts, with their use in modern theories, it is not easy to convey what St. Thomas means. First it should be noticed that by the word concept he means something more like generation than image or copy. It suggests a process of becoming, an immanent movement or evolution, and this should save us from thinking of a fixed image or lifeless reproduction.

We shall go wrong, indeed, if we insist too much even on the metaphor of physical generation, but the two processes have this in common, that both are living and, to some extent, immanent operations. To correct errors it is good to bring to mind other images, such as a musical phrase sounded spontaneously by the lips, or a solution to a problem rising to the mind. As it is often said nowadays the function of an artist, such as a sculptor, is to reproduce a man of flesh and blood in terms of stone or bronze. His idea takes shape and comes to be with its own proper rules, and may have only a faintly discernible resemblance to the original; and yet it is the original in another material. This example brings out the truth that knowledge may be determined by different kinds of objects and yet follow the laws of its own nature in conceiving of them.

We can see, therefore, how necessary it is not to be misled by a crude image or metaphor. In Cajetan's words: "And now, O novice, you will begin to raise your mind to a higher order of reality and glimpse how it is that the intellect going from potency to act, goes but to the perfection of its own being, and how to know is nothing else than for it to be, and the species is the form whereby it comes to that being." And again he chides folk for constantly underrating the act of the mind and confusing what is an immanent action with a transient. The truth is that the likeness or likening to the object is identical with the act of consciousness itself: *intelligere et sentire nihil aliud est quam quoddam esse.* "They speak in the same kind of way about immanent and transient actions; for they distinguish in both action and passion, not noticing that immanent actions are only grammatically called actions, for in fact they are operations which in reality are a certain kind of quality." We have at all costs to avoid ranking thought with material images or impressions; it were better to say that its nature is inexpressible in

other terms than so to shroud it. To leave it as inexpressible, however, does not content St. Thomas, first, because so much confused thinking about it does persist, and secondly, because it is the part of the philosopher to analyse it into its ultimate terms and causes and so state it in terms of being.

Knowledge, then, falls under the genus of immanent operations, and can best be studied in the light of its likeness to and difference from the vital activity of an organism. The main distinction, in St. Thomas' eyes, between living and non-living bodies is that action in the latter is transient, in that its effect is produced in another body. A broom ought to clean a floor, a handkerchief may serve to remove a speck from the eye. But a living organism's first care is for itself, and the effect or term of its operation remains within the subject. The flowering of a daffodil is the term of a process, and the termination is the coming to be of a certain perfection of the flower. We can describe this as a mode of growth or becoming, or simply as life. St. Thomas, for instance, says that "knowledge is a life and to it belongs all that is most perfect in life." It is in the development of this thought that he takes over and makes so much of certain mysterious *dicta* of Aristotle. "Aristotle says that by its very meaning knowledge perceives itself inasmuch as it transports to or conceives in itself a knowable object; for the intellect becomes intelligible by the very fact that it attains an intelligible object."[1] This cryptic sentence needs further explanation, especially as it contains the essence of St. Thomas' teaching. For the moment it should be read as a comment on the notion of knowledge as a form of life, and therefore as a vital immanent activity. It is in line with the blossoming of a flower; the finishing touch, so to speak, of the internal process is a perfection of the subject. Hence it is that the known belongs in some way to the subject, and

[1] Cf. *S. Theol.*, I, q. 14; *De Veritate*, II, 6, and X, 4.

were this the whole account, we should be committed to some form of idealism. In actual fact for St. Thomas the supreme degree of knowing, as found in God, is idealistic, if by that is meant that it is wholly within. God, who is pure act and being *par excellence*, is complete knower and completely knowable and known in one undivided and immanent operation ; no part of his nature remains in the dark on the object side of the relation, as passive or mere content ; it is alive in the very knowing, self-knowing itself with complete union of the two, or as it might inadequately be expressed, content and form have coalesced, expression and product are the self-same.

Were human knowledge on all fours with the vital activity of a plant or animal organism, the term or object of knowledge would necessarily be subjective. We should have, indeed, to postulate an external world, because the life of a flower depends on external nutriment and on environment. Nevertheless, what is external is taken over and transformed into the life of the flower, so that there is no conformity between the form which crowns its life and the wherewithal of its life. There is, then, a specific difference between the vital operations of organic life and knowledge. But this difference should not blind us to what is common. Knowledge on one side of it is essentially an immanent act. "*In his quæ sunt supra animam, idem est videre et habere,*" St. Thomas quotes from St. Augustine ; vision and possession are the same. The higher the form of knowing is, the more intimate it is. "The more anything is known, the more intimate is the intellectual conception, the more one with the knower. For the intellect, inasmuch as it is in act, becomes one with the known."

Knowledge, however, differs specifically from the vital act of a flower in at least two respects.. In the flowering of a daffodil the activity is unconscious. To understand knowledge we have to think of the flower as conscious of

itself. It is this reflection on itself which enables the intellect of man to pass judgment, to know the conformity of his own activity with what is the real world. The mind, as it were, feeds on the world of reality or being, but—and here is the second specific note of the knowing activity—it does not change the nature of the form offered to it. It absorbs it into its own life without defacing the other ; it perfects itself, and yet in such a way that it can enjoy the other *qua* other. In more technical language, the immanent activity is specified or characterised by the real and independent object external to the mind. We have an immanent operation which perfects the subject, and so there is no question of knowledge making or producing in any material sense of the term. There is a becoming. The subject has become more learned or wise, and the knowledge he possesses is specified by what is not the subject but an alien reality. He knows reality for what it is in itself, and yet he knows it according to the mode of his own spiritual being and as a perfection of himself. This is the reason why St. Thomas says that knowledge is of reality, and asserts also that knowing is an immanent operation with truth as its perfection. There is a conforming of the mind to the real object, and this process of conforming is luminous to the mind which, by its very nature, is always self-conscious or reflective. Hence the definition of truth given in the words that it is the recognised conformity of the mind with its object, is exact.

To complete this account it should be added that St. Thomas, throughout, is relying on his metaphysical principles of act and potency. The play which he makes of these terms is somewhat bewildering to the modern reader, and it is impossible in a small space to show all their ramifications. Yet, as a modern Thomist has written : " The coincidence of the knower and the known, of the subject and the object *in the identity of one act*, here is the whole metaphysical secret of knowledge as such. Know-

ledge is the prerogative of the act, of the act which is self-luminous because it is not separated from the self; all darkness comes from the potency which divides the act from itself. God, who is pure Act, must know himself perfectly. . . . Mind means the presence of the act to itself; it will exist wherever the act emerges above the potency, that is to say, wherever an activity is deployed which has itself, totally or partially, for its own term. And the immanence of the object, in its turn, will consist in its total or partial participation in the interior act of the subject; in the measure of its metaphysical participation the object partakes of the limpidity of the immanent act and becomes luminous for the subject."[1] God's act is completely immanent and he exhausts the intelligibility of being in the light of his own essence which is himself, intelligible and intelligent in consummate union; and he measures like an artist the intelligibility of his creation by its nearness to his own idea, which is his own immanent life or subsistent act. Between God and man St. Thomas inserts into his metaphysical scheme the angels. They represent, philosophically, natures which are complete and at the same time self-conscious. Being complete they have not to learn about themselves, to grow in essential self-knowledge from experience. They are act and their potency is due not to any shortcoming in what they ought to be, but to the necessarily specific and limited character of their nature or essence. Their self-consciousness is therefore complete and intuitive; subject and object are one in the immanent and transparent, because conscious, activity of their life or thought. Being wholly themselves, they are also, in some fashion, all things (*quodammodo omnia*). All nature is reflected in the dynamic immanent idea which is their nature in act. They see reality in terms of themselves, their living form, and without falsehood, because it is the nature of thought to be both

[1] J. Maréchal, *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique*, Vol. V, p. 60.

immanent and to know or possess reality as it is in itself.

The human mind is to the angelic as reason is to intuition. It is not from the beginning made perfect or complete; it is subject to growth by the continued discovery of the real world, and so there is passivity as well as activity in the immanent life of thought. "Inferior intellectual substances, namely, human souls, have an intellectual power which is not by its nature complete, but is completed successively by the reception of intelligible forms from things."[1] The human mind corresponds to pure potentiality in the realm of matter, and the degree of immanence is proportionately low. Instead of intuition, the union of subject and object in the self-conscious act, the human intelligence has to rely on external experience. It rises and falls with the rhythm of the senses. What comes through them has to be turned to the profit of the mind, and so human knowledge suffers under a double disadvantage; the senses provide only the outward guise of nature, and by their help the intellect has to conceive laboriously what it would prefer to possess by intuition. "The intellect is concerned with being as universal. We can determine, therefore, whether the intellect is in act or in potency from the consideration how the intellect stands to universal being. There is to be found a kind of intellect which stands to universal being as the act of all that is. Such is the divine intellect, the essence of God, in which every being pre-exists as to its origin and virtually as in its first cause; and so the divine intellect is not in potency but is pure act. But no created intellect can stand as act in respect of the whole of universal being, for then it would have to be an infinite being. Hence it follows that every created intellect, by the fact that it is, is not the act of all that is intelligible, but is related to the intelligible as potency to act. Potency, however, stands

[1] *S. Theol.*, I, q. 55, a. 2.

to act in a twofold way. There is a potency which is always perfect by its act . . . ; and there is a potency which is not always in act, but from potency proceeds to act. . . . The angelical intellect is always in act in respect to what is intelligible to it. . . . But the human intellect, which is the lowest in the rank of minds . . . is in potency in respect to what is intelligible, and at the beginning is like a *tabula rasa* on which nothing is written, as the Philosopher says."

The intellectual life of a human being is dependent, then, on sensible experience ; and therefore it must be both passive and active. As an immanent act it is active, as specified by the object of experience it is passive. The activity of the mind, moreover, is complicated by the fact already mentioned, that its content comes through the windows of the senses. Somehow or other this has to be converted into the intellectual life of the mind. Here it is that the psychology of St. Thomas joins on to his theory of knowledge, and the meaning and necessity of the *intellectus agens* and *species intelligibiles* can be discerned. What concerns us for the moment is to see that the metaphysical analysis has led us back to what was said at the beginning of the chapter about the concept. There it was said that the concept was a medium *quo* of knowledge ; it is the mode in which the mind knows the real object and knows it truly. Now we can see more fully what this means. The intellectual activity works on the material of sense to convert it into its own life. Here the immanent operation of the mind is foremost and the process leads to a perfection of the knowing subject. But the concept thus formed is double faced ; it looks to the object as well as to the subject serving as a medium to know the object. But as this concept is intellectual and universal with its origin in sensible experience, the two have to be reunited in the one indivisible and synthetic act of judgment. Only in the affirmation that A is B has

the intellect assured itself about the nature of reality, and been conscious in the very act that its thinking of it is true.

To sum up, then, what has been said. St. Thomas looks upon knowledge as a form of life. Life is an immanent activity with various degrees of realisation. The amœba shows internal adaptation but seems as little conscious of its neighbours as it is of itself. As life ascends, the recognition of what is other grows *pari passu* with knowledge of self, but wherever life is restrained by a material organism neither the world in itself nor the nature of the self can be truly recognised. At a certain level of life consciousness proper or knowledge supervenes, and to St. Thomas it is nothing else than the perfection natural to an activity at a certain stage of immanence. The subject ceases to be wholly taken up with its work ; its mark of immanence is that it has gained itself. It is so much of a self that it can recognise its own handiwork, so self-possessed that it can distinguish other things from itself and itself from other things. Thus it is in one and the same act that a self is self-conscious and knows other things for what they are ; and this is a true definition of knowledge according to St. Thomas. In other words, knowledge has for its content the whole world in so far as it is intelligible ; the intelligible being understood is the act of knowing. *Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu.* The more the knower is self-conscious the more is he in possession of himself and of all things. In human experience there is much darkness or potentiality. The child moves out from the night of unknowing to a discovery of the world and of himself. His nature never becomes wholly luminous to him ; never in the immediacy of himself to himself can he catch sight of his own expression, of his nature in act. Were he to have this intuition then he would perceive all else synoptically, and his own life as a conscious poem of God. God alone abides in the absolute perfection of pure act. This is the culminating point of

life, where no interior resistance, no shadow of darkness, is possible; all is there conscious as act, all subsists there as idea; it is *noesis, noeseos noesis.* Consciousness, at this divine degree of plenitude, does not entail in its necessary content any opposition of subject and object, since the absolute perfection of the act cannot have any internal limitation to surmount. All entitative opposition of subject and object in a mind springs from an imperfection in either the object or the subject or in both at the same time—according as, to use the expression of St. Thomas, the subject measures (limits) actively the object, or the object measures (limits) the subject, or both limit each other reciprocally. . . . Thus it is that God himself knows objectively in his creative power the infinite multitudes of possibles as so many external limitations which proceed from him . . . and he knows them in their very existence . . . in the creative intelligence which imposes the limitation on them. *Mensurans, non mensuratus,* "he sets upon the pomp of time the seal and semblance of eternity." Our knowledge on the contrary is not one of complete life and possession, of a plenitude running over; it is that of a wayfarer in search of the kingdom of himself and of the world; it is therefore a life of discovery and active assimilation. *Intellectus humanus, tum mensurans res, tum a rebus mensuratus.*

CHAPTER V

THE NATURE OF REALITY

§ 1. BEING

In the last chapter it was stated that knowledge gives us the reality as it is in itself, and that the perfection of that knowledge varies with the perfection of the subject knowing. The two statements are not incompatible. Human knowledge, for instance, is dependent on experience of the senses and conception, and is consummated in the synthetic act of judgment. Then it is that the mind, reflecting on its act, knows that it is thinking truly of reality. We have now to find out what is the nature of that reality which is revealed to us in thought. Now the aspect under which all reality is known is that of being. Being, as a concept, is all-inclusive and all-penetrating. "Being is what the intellect conceives first as something best known, and it is to being that it reduces all other knowledge."[1] "What our intellect comes to know first of all is being, the idea of which is included in everything that man knows. Hence the first indemonstrable principle is that a thing cannot be affirmed and denied at one and the same time."

In this sense of the word, therefore, there is no question of to be or not to be. Even not to be is only relatively nothing; otherwise it would be unthinkable. There is nothing outside being, and we are faced with the paradox that the least we can say of anything is that it is, that it is a being, and the most that we can say of anything is that it is being. "I am who am." It should be noticed,

[1] *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1.

therefore, that the notion of being is different from that of any genus or species, or any other which is not synonymous with it. The latter are of limited application and can receive addition. When Donne writes that: "The Cread is no better a glasse to see God in, than the Hyssope upon the wall; all things that are, are equally removed from being nothing; and whatsoever hath any beeing, is by that very beeing a glasse in which we see God, who is the roote, and the fountaine of all being," we recognise that glass tells us more than cedar, and hyssop than glass, and one notion does not contain the other. But in so far as each notion is "removed from being nothing," they are equally being, and there is nothing which we can say about them that is not covered and summed up in being. Being, then, is the alpha and omega of all that is or can be, and if this be so we seem inevitably led to a monism or pantheism, be it crude or refined. All multiplicity must needs be nothing more than a determination of what is one and constant. Certainly there is no escape by addition or multiplication of the items of our knowledge, by trying to find some object outside the unity of being. God and the latest discoveries of science, astronomy or archæology are all being or some kind of being. Nor again is it very satisfactory to answer, as some philosophers have done, by saying that the concept is a mere *flatus vocis*, or label or description, and so that there is no need to insist on anything common in the real objects which are collectively designated by one word. St. Thomas regards this outlet as leading straight to the precipice of scepticism and as demonstrably absurd. As already seen he held that it is the very nature of knowledge to reach truth, and so there must be something in reality which justifies our conception of it under one head. The only proper method, therefore, is to explore this fundamental and all-inclusive characteristic of being, and see whether it does not contain within it elements which will provide an answer to the problem

of the one and the many. It follows that a study of being, as such, or metaphysics, is a necessary beginning of all philosophy.

As the importance of this conclusion is great and yet is likely to be missed owing to the abstract nature of the argument, an example will not be out of place. If we wished to know the nature of water or mankind or an army or a cricket team, we should set about analysing the constituents of each of them and comparing them with things we already knew. But supposing that the constituents, say of water, showed themselves to be nothing but water, and that everything we compared it with was also water, then we should be in a quandary. There would be nothing but water and everything we said about water, all the differences would reduce themselves to the same notion. This is the situation confronting us when we approach the notion of being. "Being is what the intelligence seizes as the best known; and it is to being that it reduces all other knowledge." Our only hope, then, is to find within being itself some deep-seated differentiations, some internal order, and it would seem to follow that if we find a duality or multiplicity that these constituents or co-efficients will not be as such beings themselves. If they were we should be in the same *impasse* as before. They would each "be" just as much as the being whose constituents they are. Hence it is that St. Thomas, when he has discovered their necessity by the principle of contradiction does not, save by an oversight, apply to them the term *ens*, but *quo ens*. They are, as we might say now, necessary conditions for certain objects to be real and to be thought of as real.

These conditions are not, however, subjective, the ways in which we must think of reality if it is to be intelligible. Such a view could be shown to violate the principle of contradiction and would render all knowledge nugatory. The distinctions fall within the intelligible world, and however

outlandish they appear to those accustomed only to perceptible differences and to natures which can be represented as complete, they must be admitted as present in real objects, as separable in thought, though never existing apart, as distinct co-efficients, though never more than as co-efficients. The danger in this line of thought is, as has often been pointed out, of hypostatising abstractions. Critics of St. Thomas have found fault with him on this score, and undoubtedly in the later Middle Ages the habit became a vice. The principles, however, of St. Thomas do not commit him to any extreme realism. He meets the critic half-way with his theory of the concept. Concepts of themselves do not give truth; they are no hall-mark of the existent; they betray the defect of human knowledge and so have to be justified. All knowledge begins with sense; "the senses are the foundation and origin of human knowledge." Through them and by them alone has the mind contact with what is not itself. It is in experience, therefore, that the mind knows the existent world, and is enabled to peer into the world of essences manifested through the senses. The concept resulting suffers in two ways; it is abstract, and secondly, no matter what it signifies, it cannot avoid representing the immaterial sensibly. The very word concept, for instance, though it signifies something mental, does so by what is representatively material, and we have only to consult the vocabulary we use to see how universal and inevitable is this practice. As St. Thomas says in the *Contra Gentiles*, when speaking of God and the names attributed to him: "but if we consider the mode of signification, every name is attended with defect; for by a name we express things as we conceive them in our understanding; but our understanding, taking its beginnings of knowledge from sensible objects, does not transcend that mode which it finds in such sensible objects. In them the form is one thing, and that which has the form is another. The

form, to be sure, is simple, but imperfect, as not subsisting by itself; while that which has the form subsists, but is not simple—nay, is concrete and composite. Hence, whatever our understanding marks as subsisting, it marks in the concrete; what it marks as simple, it marks not as something that is, but as that whereby something is."

St. Thomas, therefore, protects himself against an exaggerated realism. He bids us beware of identifying the conceptual order with the actually existent order. To be on safe ground we must have begun with sensible experience. There something actual has been encountered, a foothold gained on the territory of being, and small though the hold is, it suffices. We are able therefrom to work out with the help of the principle of contradiction, the first law of being, what the rest of the land is like. We can, that is, lay down that certain things must necessarily exist, that others are possible, and what are the conditions which allow us to know and to distinguish between change and identity, substance and quality and quantity, cause and effect, matter and spirit. But all this procedure relies on the fact that we gain some knowledge of the nature of reality by our sensible acquaintance with it. His contemporaries, the followers of St. Augustine, disdained this lowly introduction; they began with Truth, and the idea of it; they assumed that by the very nature of mind they were transported without the aid of sense to a world of pure and immaterial reality. The difference in point of view is well seen in their respective attitude to the ontological argument for the existence of God. St. Thomas would not accept it, and in its place formulated a series of arguments which start from sensible experience, from contingent being revealed to us in it, to the reality of an absolute being. That absolute being again, owing to the second defect of the human intelligence, cannot be represented adequately by the concept, with its origins in sense, but it can be signified.

§ 2. ACT AND POTENCY

The first great object, therefore, of philosophy is to determine the nature and laws of being, and it is a necessary precursor to any of the sciences. That is not to deny that the special sciences are autonomous; they have their own starting points, and abstracting what is relative to their aim they can leave all else aside as irrelevant. But as they are designedly departmental and deal with being as subject to number or motion, they cannot tell us what are the ultimate determinants and laws of reality, its inner constitution which is to be found indifferently, whether we are thinking of an electron (if an electron be real), radium, a symphony, or an angel. These determinants and this inner constitution are to be found with the help of the principle of contradiction. Being of itself does not imply any imperfection, as that would be to deny the principle already enunciated; to be, therefore, without any qualification is complete and absolute reality. There can be no shadow of change or alteration, no question of any limitation or rival. But this may seem to be playing with an abstract notion; our first vague impressions of the outside world are charged with a minimum of meaning; we feel or hear or see something; it is a very indeterminate being indeed. Nevertheless, once we declare that it *is* something, we are forced, willy-nilly, to admit some absolute reality. We simply cannot think of reality ceasing altogether and reappearing like the revolving light in a far-away lighthouse. Our imagination indeed may play us false here in the same way as we sometimes suppose that nothing might exist. But to be is the opposite of not to be, and so it is that once we have affirmed something to be it either is so necessarily itself or else it rests on what is absolutely and necessarily real. Now it does not seem that

the vague and common notion of being can be the final resting-place of the mind; it betokens the most rudimentary knowledge possible, and yet if we amplify it with wealth of detail, we also limit it. We have now beings of this kind and that kind, so that the expansion is also a contraction. Our only resource is to say that the highest must be expressed in the same way as the lowest, that its description will be just "being" absolutely and without qualification. Nor is this the abstract nonsense it may at first sight appear. In our everyday language and everyday thought we do make use of an emphatic "is" or "real" to sum up the best we can think of some thing or person. We think of life as higher than what is animate because it is more real; it can be more itself. We speak of vitality as positive, of being more ourselves, and our thoughts wing themselves to being, whose intensity of life is such that all words prove poor descriptions save the simple and tiny one, "is."

The word which St. Thomas uses to express what we all mean by phrases like the above, phrases about intensity of life or reality, is act. Is then all that is comprised under the common note of being, act? St. Thomas answers "No." And starting with experience, he makes his first great distinction within being. Objects of experience come and go, they change their appearance and their nature. The principle of contradiction, which is a law of being, forbids us to think that something can be itself and not itself at the same time. In his *Commentary on the Physics* he illustrates the point he is making with the example of water. Cold water becomes hot. Here we have water which is what it is, namely, cold; and then soon after it becomes water of which we can make the judgment, this water is warm. Now cold is not hot. So, to save the principle of contradiction, there must be something else in the cold water than the being cold. Otherwise it would be impossible for it to be anything else than cold. There

is what St. Thomas calls the potency to be something else in act. The example chosen here may have its difficulties, but it serves to bring out what must necessarily be present in any being that is capable of change. It cannot be being *tout court*, for being cannot cease to be of itself; it cannot be nothing, for it is and it changes. Therefore it must be composed of act and potency, act which gives it whatever positive perfection it has, and potency which allows it to acquire a new act or perfection which it has not at the moment.

What has so far been said is little more than a medieval version of what is contained in Aristotle. A lengthy discussion of it can therefore be excused. It is important to see, however, that the distinction of act and potency gives the entry to the nature of being. Being frowns down upon us like a mountain shrouded in mist. It is one and it is all that is. Undeterred by this, St. Thomas examines its appearance more closely. He finds that there is change, and this must mean that what is is not in some strange way. But pure nothingness is unthinkable, so the change must be due to some principle which is neither act nor nothing, to a potency to be. Hence, every being which can change in any way, which needs the help of any other being to explain itself and to exist, must be composite. It is not pure act; it is act in so far as it is something actual and determinate, but it is relative non-being or potency in so far as it does not contain a necessity for existing within itself, in so far, that is, as the words, "may be" are applicable to it. A modern French writer has described the situation in the words "*l'indigence de l'être.*" All that we know, including ourselves, are beholden to what is. We are receivers ever and beholden to what is not ourselves for our life and growth. Many things seem to have such a slender hold on existence, and living beings are transitory. The more immanent the activity, the more enduring is the life. But even in human life

where something seems to subsist, we have to measure the " I am " against the " I was," and " what I may be," and even were we complete, the " I " would stand over against the " am " as the finite to the infinite, the contingent to the necessary and absolute.

It would be easy at this point to show that this theory of potency and act fits in with and elucidates what has been said about knowledge. With the increasing immanence of the vital activity there is a steady approach to pure act, and to a closer union of subject and object. Finally, when all potency has disappeared this vital activity has absorbed into itself its entire intelligible nature, and knower and known are act and pure being. But the real world in which both potency and act are present awaits explanation. No object of our experience but is composite ; with a considerable change of meaning we may say that it suffers from an inferiority complex. But it must not be thought, as so often happens, that the components of this complex are themselves beings. If they were we should have two beings and not one. They are co-efficients (*quo entia*) which together make up a real object. As separate they do not exist, though they are separable in thought and really distinct as co-efficients. They are to each other as the determinant and the determinable. It may happen, and indeed does often happen, that what is potency to act in a certain being can also be outside that relation a being, itself composed of act and potency. The marble in Michelangelo's Moses is what is determined to a certain form. The material form could not obviously exist without the marble, but the marble, which has received only an accidental form, has a being outside that relation, and is itself made up of potency and act. Where, however, we are considering the nature of any one being, there, with the one exception of what is pure act, there is a composition, and the co-efficients are not themselves to be given the dignity of being. There

is all the difference in the world, then, between saying that atoms, for instance, are made up of atoms, and each atom of matter and form.

The two are, however, despite their humble status, both real and really distinct. They are not what are sometimes called logical aspects or ways of thinking; they are imposed on the mind by the objective world by virtue of the law of contradiction. Again, they are really distinct, for if potency were but an aspect of act, it would come ultimately to saying that being and not-being also are aspects of one another. St. Thomas is at great pains to establish these positions; they are for him the canons of criticism which he always applies rigorously whenever he is faced with any problem. As has been pointed out, all the chief terms that he uses are to be understood by reference to being and to the distinction of potency and act. "Essence is what a being is. Existence is the act by which a being is. Potency is that which can be, or the capacity for being. Act is that which exists. Substance is that which has existence in itself. Accident is that which has no autonomous existence. God is the being who exists, and cannot not exist. Cause is that by which being begins to be. Effect is that which exists by virtue of another being. End is the reason for the existence of a being. The true is being in so far as it is known. The good is being in so far as it is desired. Becoming is the passage from non-being to being. Matter and form are the elements of substantial being, which is created and corporeal."[1]

It is inevitable that the bare statement of these distinctions and the corollaries drawn from them must, without the arguments favouring them, have an air of unreality. Metaphysical speculation and deduction are with some justice generally regarded with suspicion. To gauge their significance we must remember that it is these very problems which have always exercised the minds of

[1] Olgiati-Zybura, *The Key to the Study of St. Thomas*, p. 43.

the greatest thinkers, religious and philosophical, and that the differences between Parmenides, Plotinus, Spinoza, Hegel and Gentilé, to mention only a few, turn on the definition and analysis of being given by each. Religious thinkers, again, troubled with the spectacle around them of what seems in their eyes but a fractional and chequered truth and goodness, take refuge sometimes in what is "beyond thought" or "beyond reality." Taken literally, such a "beyond" can have no meaning. The possibility, however, of some truth behind the statement cannot lightly be dismissed. Both it and the other extreme, that there is nothing but limited being, receive an attempted explanation in the metaphysics of St. Thomas. By an employment of his fundamental distinctions and what he calls analogy he tries to find a *via media*.

These fundamental distinctions are potency and act, and matter and form. Really the latter is only a subdivision of the first. The relations between the two will best appear in a rapid sketch of all this metaphysical land. It is necessary to warn the reader again that the connection of point with point must necessarily appear somewhat arbitrary in any short survey. Any form of becoming supplies us with potency and act, for no object can have been simply and wholly before, what it afterwards becomes. Shakespeare in the womb had not actually the intelligence to write *Hamlet*, but he would never have written it had he been initially without any capacity to do so. If we now take an example from extended physical bodies, we shall have the same distinction in terms of matter and form. The simplest illustration is an extended body. It is divisible, but for it to be divisible there must be present two co-efficients, namely pure multiplicity and pure unity. Neither exists apart; nothing is present actually save a unified or extended something, a continuum which we cannot have except as divided, but nevertheless we could not divide or unify it at our will unless it was definitely

multipliable. These two in respect of each other are form and matter. This argument is put neatly by St. Thomas as follows: "Every continuum is one in act and multiple in potency, just as the parts of a line are not actually two but one."[1] It is found again in the *Summa*. "Every body is in potency, because, as a continuum, it is infinitely divisible."

I have said above that the distinction of matter and form is a subdivision of potency and act. This statement, as it stands, would not be accepted by all the commentators of St. Thomas. Just as it is still a matter of dispute whether Aristotle drew his distinctions from experience or deduced them *a priori* from the nature of being, so there are some who maintain that St. Thomas derives his theory from the first objects of knowledge, namely, physical bodies perceived by the senses. For this reason matter and form precedes as a theory that of potency and act, and is the foundation of all that follows in the *Metaphysics*. Whatever must be said of Aristotle, I do not think that this is the order which St. Thomas follows. It is more fair to him to say that potency and act under the guise of matter and form revealed itself to him in sensible experience. Being is the object of mind, and to be intelligible as beings, the objects of experience must be composed of potency and act. It is not easy, however, to be quite certain of St. Thomas' mind, and it is to be regretted that there is no definitive passage on this subject. On the other hand, there are innumerable applications of potency and act, and the principle dominates his thought. The temptation for the commentator is indeed to regard this principle as sprung like the goddess, fully made, from the head of Aquinas, to forget that his thought shows development and is not always steady. Nevertheless it is an impossible task to treat his work historically. There is too much to cover, and the motives of his writing are so varied that the only method is to piece together from works

[1] *De Nat. Materiæ*, c. 9.

separated in time, often by years, the philosophic system that makes his views consistent.

In that system almost all his commentators have given a large place to a third distinction, one between essence and existence. The dispute over this distinction has led almost to bloodshed amongst his followers and critics. The strict Thomists insist quite rightly that it plays an important part in the system, and further that it can be viewed as a special instance of the general principle of act and potency. The conjoining of it with the latter principle is a noteworthy and audacious feat on the part of St. Thomas. The general principle is Aristotelian, while the distinction of essence and existence is more probably Neo-Platonic, and it seems that it was from Avicenna that St. Thomas borrowed it. He found thereby the means to make a clear-cut and irreducible division between God and contingent beings. God is being without limitation within or without; he necessarily or essentially is. That is to say, that in him essence and existence are identical. In everything else there is a real distinction between the two. When I say "this man exists," there is nothing in the nature of man which compels me to say that it must exist. It is just a nature or an essence, which, if it is to exist, requires some other principle than itself to make it do so. It can be considered, then, as in some sense in potency to act, and not act itself, and so it is that in the actually existing man we can distinguish two separable principles. If this is true, then between the essentially existent, God, and the contingently existing, there is a division which puts out of court altogether all forms of pantheism and monism.[1]

[1] It should be observed that the distinction does not refer to a situation in which the thing or essence does not yet exist. Obviously the child which is to be conceived to-morrow does not now exist. What St. Thomas is contemplating is the now existing child. It is because even now the existence of the child is not necessary, because human nature carries with it the possibility of decease, that St. Thomas argues to the presence of two distinctive principles in what is actually existing.

Common sense may, like Dr. Johnson, be inclined to stamp its foot with annoyance at this excessive subtlety over abstractions, but after all a delicate discrimination is requisite just as much in philosophy as in art and other pursuits. Besides, common sense as well as philosophy agrees in recognising that the meaning or nature of an object can be understood without reference to the fact that a specimen of it exists. A dead or a live cat, it is all the same to the scientist. The mammoth, even though it be now extinct, can be distinguished from an elephant. What then is the relation of existence to nature or essence ? We use the same word "is" or "being" in connection with both, and we feel that somehow or other it does make all the difference in the world whether an object, say ourselves, exists or not. This implies that we think highly of existence; it is what summons to life a kingdom of the dead; it bars the gates against nihilism, and is the last word without which all else is wasted. And if we say that so-and-so had better not have existed, we are not impugning existence, but the subject who is unworthy of it. It is also the first word, because if nothing existed then nothing could ever have existed. Now this, translated into the metaphysical language of St. Thomas, means that existence is act *par excellence*, and secondly that existence precedes possibility and potency. For anything to be possible there must be something existing. Thirdly, that something which exists is either of a nature which could not possibly be non-existent, or itself requires an explanation, and is a hybrid. In the last resort, therefore, "to be" must involve both essence and existence in one. A being whose essence is at the furthest remove conceivable from nothingness or non-being, exists not by virtue of anything else, but by proprietary right. It is a one hundred per cent. being, and as such we cannot talk of it as though it could be deprived of existence. It is supremely alive; it is essential actuality. Furthermore,

the identity of existence and essence, as already stated, disposes of all forms of pantheism and monism. All other essences, if they exist, do so on sufferance; they subsist in their own way. Existence is theirs, but it is limited by what they are to a finite existence; there is evidence, that is, of potency and act in the tissue of their being.

With these three distinctions we have the *mise en scène* for all that is to follow. The highest kind of being is pure act in which essence and existence are identical. Below pure act there is always a mixture of potency or limitation, and it is the combination of the two which constitutes the real object. Neither is to be conceived as independent of the other. The act determines the potency, and the only meaning to be attached to the potency is that it really limits the act. But this it does in varying fashion according to the nature of the act or form. To see how this happens we may, without prejudice, use first the example of the angels. The angels typify the distinction between essence and existence. We can represent them as natures or forms which are complete in themselves. As contrasted with human nature, which exists only in countless individual men, all alike in essence, an angel sums up in himself and so exhausts all the perfection of his nature. He is therefore unique, an essence which is never repeated. He is nevertheless finite, because he has a nature of a determinate kind. And it is this nature which limits the act of existence. An existing angel, therefore, is composite in this sense that his nature or essence is distinguishable from his existence. It is conceivable that he might not exist and this is enough to show that the essence is as a potency to the act of existence.

After the pure forms of the angels comes man, half spirit and half matter. As such his very nature connotes a reference to matter, and so, unlike the angel, he cannot be explained in terms of pure form alone. Form specifies

and determines, and all that is intelligible falls under it. Now human nature is multiple, though no one man is more a man than another. It would seem, then, that form is here limited by some potency, the effect of which is to multiply or individuate without addition of meaning. As, however, there are certain peculiarities, which present some difficulties, in the application of the principle of matter and form to man, it will be better to pass for the moment to simpler illustrations of it. Below man there is the material universe. All the material beings in it have, in so far as they are intelligible, a form determining a material to be such and such ; that is to say, there are two factors necessarily present for us to be able to think at all of a definite material thing. The form gives identity and definiteness, the potency of matter allows of multiplicity and change. To prevent misunderstanding, the reader must again be cautioned that the distinctions here are metaphysical and not physical. It is for the physicist to settle what are the physical properties of a natural body, and where and when we can speak of natural substances. All that the metaphysician is saying is that for a material thing to be intelligible as a being, it must be composed of two co-efficients, which are not beings themselves, but make up one being. Presented with a world of sensible objects, the mind finds that it is unable to explain the data by an appeal to the form alone. This particular horse differs from that particular horse, though they are both horses, and only intelligible as horses. To go back to the simplest example, in every material body we have what is indefinitely divisible but always actually divided. It is multiple in potency and one in act. All that is definite and intelligible comes from the form, the rest from matter. Space, then, owing to its intimate connection with extension and time, which measures the continuous movement, lies on the side of matter in any definite being which is spatial and temporal. The

possibility, too, of an indefinite repetition of a form must be ascribed to the material co-efficient.

The form, on the other hand, which vanishes and reappears in innumerable instances and saves reality from being a mere chaotic flux, permits of science and philosophy. It unifies and determines, and so can be an object of thought. At this point in the metaphysics of St. Thomas many of his favourite terms meet and reinforce each other in an almost bewildering way. Here also the Aristotelian and Platonic traditions make an alliance. As contrasted with the matter of which it is the form, the form is at least negatively immaterial. It is not wholly so, because to be a being it has to be concreted as this spatial individual thing. But it can be thought of indifferently to this or that particular embodiment. St. Thomas thereby implies a proportion between immateriality and intelligibility. He is also able to make the passage from matter to spirit without much difficulty, and to reopen the meaning of the word "form." The form of a material thing is a potential or latent idea. As existing, it makes with matter this particular thing; as thought of, it is regarded in its abstraction from the individuating matter, in its immateriality, and as such it is an idea, the form known by a mind and perfecting the mind. Once more we are looking at an aspect of the truth formulated in the sentence: the intelligible in act is the intellect in act. The world is a cosmos and our mind, by the medium of the senses, slowly and fretfully pieces out its meaning. There is difficulty and indefiniteness in the knowing because the mind of man is limited by its co-efficient in human nature, the body. Again, the world is not one of pure forms but of forms immersed in matter; there is meaning to be found there, meaning and law in the midst of contingency. The form is intelligible, but like Samson, it has lost its native strength because of its paramour, and is "silent at the mill with slaves." It shines for others and

not to itself. It is an idea, not because it can know itself, but because it can be known by others. It is knowable and so is in potency to be known, but as known it is the spoil of an intelligence and the perfection of that immanent act. One step more ; if the form were not concreted by matter, but existed of itself, then, in St. Thomas' eyes, it would be immaterial and necessarily intelligent. To grasp this, interchange the words "form" and "idea," as we have seen can justifiably be done in this philosophy. Now instead of an idea which is only potentially understood, we have an idea in act ; instead of an intelligible object we have a subsistent idea, a consciousness in act, a thought which is active, the presence of self to itself. This is not the lot of man but of the angels, who can therefore be called pure forms or subsistent ideas, and gather up in their explanation a strange mingling of Christian, Platonic and Aristotelian traditions.

The vague though all-inclusive notion of being with which St. Thomas started has now broken up into a hierarchy of beings separate despite their inter-connection under the common attribute of being. The means whereby he saves all differences from an absorption into one is the discovery of something real, which of itself is neither being nor nothing. This is potency. At its lowest level it is a kind of Proteus, always changing its shape, or rather, as that is misleading, it has no shape of its own, but is responsible for change of form. Looked at apart it might be christened positive indigence. In truth, however, it never exists apart, as it is not something itself. It has no reality save in co-partnership with the form. There it stands as the determinable in a determined something ; but it has not disappeared in that conjunction, else the thing would be imperishable, without spot or wrinkle. An absolutist philosophy has to deny finiteness, to make of it an appearance which will be overcome. The Absolute has unfolded itself into a manifold in space and time,

and all has to be resolved back into the One. St. Thomas avoids this answer by establishing potency in the very heart of the real world. Finiteness or limitation is not for him a partial aspect, a mere appearance or illusion ; it is real, not as something by itself—for it is always coincident with act—but by making a distinct contribution to the reality of any finite being. For this reason finite being can never be identified with absolute being ; to attempt to do so would be to remove from the former what really and precisely makes it to be what it is.

St. Thomas holds that potency cannot realise itself. He is here consistent. If potency had such a power, it would already be act and a being instead of a factor in a being. To speak, then, of becoming or development without something which develops is a mistake. Those who talk of flux or change or an *élan* (unless they mean by that pure act and being), err by thinking of potency as a positive being without the co-efficient of act. They are in danger, too, of making what is lowest into a god. Pure potency is just what is not nothing ; it is indistinctness, the principle of indefiniteness, multiplicity, barbarism waiting to be civilised, a formless void distinct from nothingness only by its capacity to receive form. By form alone does it rise to its destiny and " inherit the earth." With experience to back him, St. Thomas maintains that in the consideration of this world of ours, we should set more store on form than on matter. Form is the principle giving us law and order and understanding. To ignore it for what is called life or experience is to yield, more often than not, to what is not a principle of life at all but of decay, to what is instinctive and unconscious, in fact to all that is denoted by the potency of matter in St. Thomas' use of the term.

To sum up, being, which is the most vague and universal notion, has within it many varieties. The highest degree of it is act. The next stage is that of essence, which is complete in itself and so pure form, but in potency to

existence. One cannot say in regarding such a nature that perforce it must exist. " To be such " and " to be " are not identical. Next comes an essence which is not pure form as it contains a dual element within it, matter as well as form. The form of a man or of a horse is not subsistent. It is multiple and is embodied always in particular men and horses. Man, however, has a peculiar status. Though he is made up of form and matter, owing to his power of reflection on his own acts, he is able to determine himself and to know reality as it is in itself. The form is not wholly occupied in being the vital principle, unifying and determining the body; it has an immaterial function in its consciousness of itself and of others. It is, to hark back to the theory of knowledge, not merely intelligible but intelligent, the tiniest creature in the kingdom of spirit. Below man the form continues to supply unity and meaning in lesser and lesser degree. The non-living has not the same unity and immanence as the living. Act diminishes and the potency of matter is more and more evident. Sheer multiplicity and formlessness threatens the very existence of form, and this is the bathos of being. We glimpse the presence of a principle, namely, prime matter, whose sole reality consists in the limitation of act.

§ 3. ANALOGY AND SUBSTANCE

The reader will do well to compare this account with what St. Thomas has to say about time and space and the general attributes which reality possesses. He will find that his narrative of them tallies with the metaphysical divisions already given and makes use of what is called a principle of proportion or analogy. We have, for instance, a distinction and a proportion between time

and *ævum* and eternity. The first measures the movement of bodies, the second belongs to pure forms which are complete but finite, while eternity is, in the definition borrowed from Boëthius, "*interminabilis vitæ tota simul et perfecta possessio.*"[1] A similar proportion can be made out for spatial occupancy, angelic presence and the divine ubiquity. We have already seen the grades of knowledge, from the antecedent to knowledge, physical nature which contains forms or ideas in matter, to forms conscious of themselves but through matter, upward again to subsistent ideas till thought and thinker are identified in one supreme actuality. Another way of putting this is experience, reason, intuition and the knowledge of God which is *causa rerum.* Then again in terms of activity, there is what is acted upon, what acts upon others and is acted upon, and what acts upon others without being acted upon; there is change in the sense of locomotion, development or becoming, and unchanging fullness of life. It is easy to multiply examples. Perhaps best of all is immanence and life, because it offers also an image which is useful as a kind of Ariadne thread in this obscure country. Act can be described as concentrated and quintessential life; God is this life. All else suffers from a certain diffusion and lack of unity. We apply this criterion every day of our lives in our judgments upon character, works of art and objects of value. We contrast quality and quantity, intensity with what is dispersed and inactive; we attribute power and independence to a man with a "personality," and speak of others as "going to pieces." A rich mind is unified and "alive" and communicates knowledge without loss, while the recipient participates according to the capacity or potency of his understanding. A character, like that of the Founder of Christianity, contains in one what has been reflected in

[1] It will be noticed that, as already indicated, the words *represent* eternity in terms of time and *signify* what is not temporal.

varying degrees in other *media*, in saints' lives, in poetry and painting.

The proportion thus described goes by the name of analogy, and the theory of analogy is by some thought to be the most important contribution that St. Thomas has made to philosophy. Before explaining it, it may be well to determine more closely the meaning of some of the terms which St. Thomas uses. A passage at the beginning of the *De Veritate* does this shortly. After saying that the general notion of being is what is best known and is indefinable, and that as there is nothing outside it it cannot be a class name, he goes on: "We can speak of the addition of something to being in this way, that what we add to being expresses a mode of being that is not explicitly indicated by the word being. This may happen in two ways: first of all the expressed mode of being may be any special mode of being. For there are different grades of being, in accordance with which we speak of different modes of being. According to these modes of being we distinguish the different categories of things. Substance does not add a difference to being such as would imply a nature superadded to being. The term substance rather expresses a certain definite mode of being, namely that of being-in-itself. The same holds of the other categories. Secondly, the expressed mode may be a determination that is true in general of all being. And this mode again can be viewed in two ways: first, in so far as it is found in every being *per se*; and secondly, in so far as it is found in every being in relation to another. The mode found in every being *per se* is either an affirmation or a negation in the thing. Now there is only one thing that can be affirmed absolutely and that can be accepted for every being, and that is its essence. In this sense we use the term, thing. This word, 'thing,' is distinguished from being in this, that being expresses the act of being (existence), while thing expresses the essence. The negation which is

absolutely found in all things is the absence of division. This is expressed by the term ' one,' for the one is nothing but the undivided being."

In this passage we find stated a twofold mode of being, the substantial and the accidental. As the Thomistic meaning of substance is often misunderstood, and as it bears on the doctrine of analogy, a word about it is necessary. Substance and accident cover all the possible ways a reality can exist. A real object either depends formally on itself or on something else ; it either belongs to something else, and so is an attribute and adjective, or it is a subject of attributes. The various ways it can belong to something else are given in the list of categories given by Aristotle and accepted by St. Thomas. The notion of substance is bound up with that of being, so that, as the notion of being is objective, so also is the notion of substance. We cannot help thinking of beings as subjects ; there is no such thing possible as quantity or quality, as green or motion or knowledge or evolution without some subject which has these attributes. This necessity of thought (which is the same as thinking of what necessarily is) reveals to us the existence of substances, or at any rate, one substance. It should be noted that substance belongs to the order of intelligible reality and not primarily to the sensible order ; it is a *noeton* or noumenal real. The attempt, therefore, to replace it by sensible qualities, to make of it nothing but a sum of sensible attributes, is doomed from the outset. No less than cause and end and essence and existence it belongs to being and not to any possibilities of sensation. In other words, if we admit that there is a proper object of the intellect and that that object is real, we must also admit that there is substance, which is for both Aristotle and St. Thomas nothing but being proper without qualification. " Being belongs absolutely and by priority to substances ; secondarily and only relatively to accidents."

This does not mean that we are to suppose a complete gap between the sensible appearance and the intelligible essence. St. Thomas does not describe a substance primarily as that which underlies accidents, though this meaning has crept into philosophy and excited some ridicule. What he says is that "a substance is a thing, whose essence it is not to have its being in another thing." Substance is a mode of existence which is due to certain natures and not to others. To be, for example, a swan, is to be in a self-subsistent way. On the other hand, to be black has no self-subsistence. It exists by inhering in something else, such as a swan. Substance, therefore, is used for essences or natures which are of such a sort as not to inhere in another subject. Generally St. Thomas employs the word essence to express what the thing is, nature to express the essence as the principle of activity, and substance for its mode of existence. The three, therefore, are the same under different aspects. As there are different kinds of substances which vary in perfection, he uses the word subsistence or hypostasis (*suppositum*) for a material substance which exists incommunicably, and person for a similar kind of being which is rational. A rational being not only is a substance that is self-subsisting, but is conscious of it. He is conscious of possessing himself and so is his own master and responsible for his actions. In this way St. Thomas by his metaphysical principles elicits from being a definition of personality which corresponds with experience, and also, incidentally, still further elucidates his theory of knowledge and the meaning he assigns to act.

This mode of subsistence is therefore what primarily constitutes substance. As a consequence of this we are bound, according to St. Thomas, to think of it as underlying appearances; it preserves appearances. The latter would not be the appearances of the same thing unless that subsistent thing remained the same despite the change in these appearances. The latter are indeed ingredients

in the substance; they are not grouped round it like satellites round a sun, which is something complete without them. The appearances are truly a revelation of the nature of an object, but they fall short by being only the accidents; to use a vivid phrase of St. Thomas, they lead us by the hand to what is essential and intelligible. They belong to the sensible order and can never of themselves amount to a *noeton*, no more than a succession of phenomena can constitute causality as such. We know physical objects by their appearance and external behaviour. As they are composed of matter and form, this way of knowing them is valid despite its imperfections. That it is imperfect is to St. Thomas evident both *a priori* and from experience. Science is only a substitute for intuition; it observes and experiments and argues laboriously, and by a roundabout way, by elimination of the irrelevant and detection of constants, discovers the true cause and the determinate nature manifested in the effects. We do not see essences by intuition; we pass from the external and changing to a knowledge of the interior and permanent; but we are forced to recognise that the substantial mode of existing is really distinct from all that is accidental. St. Thomas steers a middle course between holding that the substance is nothing but the accidents, and the view sometimes ascribed to him that the substance remains unaffected by the change of accidents like a sleeping princess. What he does say is that when something suffers an accidental change, there is no possible explanation unless there is some principle which is responsible for the identity, as well as a principle which allows of change within an identity. It is impossible that what is responsible for the change can, at the same time, be responsible for the identity, and furthermore, the change is inconceivable without the subject. Hence it is the subject with its accidents, and neither one nor the other apart, which is active in change. This St. Thomas expresses by saying that it is the substance

which changes or acts *by* its accidents. He is making a real distinction between the two, and he is also asserting their union. It is of the very nature of material substances to be subject to change, as it is also of their very nature to be composed of matter and form. But as the real distinction of these latter two does not interfere with but rather makes possible the unity of the being they compose, so *mutatis mutandis*, a real distinction between substance and accidents does not preclude their intimate union in a substantial being which is subject to change.

If this still causes difficulty, help may be gained by utilising the theory of form already stated. Form and matter make up the material being, and it is the form which determines it to be what it is. The substantial mode of existence, then, may be thought of as the ground plan or the permanent and unchanging law of the material object. To quote a distinguished modern Thomist: "Substance on analysis resolves itself into matter and form, in the case of physical substances; into pure form subsisting in itself, in the case of immaterial natures. Now the matter is only a defined movement; the form is the idea which realises this movement, and the subsistence is nothing but a mode. . . . The Thomist system is not the instinctive substantialisation which relativism is out to avoid; nor again is it the Platonic idealism which creates two worlds of ideas, the one in phenomena, the other in a mysterious subsistent world. It includes, with Aristotle, ideas in things. Its substance is, first of all, idea; but a real and evolving idea, which supposes consequently a subject, if it is the case of an evolution which is an *actus imperfecti*; and in every case a subsistent mode, if the change is nothing more than a simple manifestation of potency in a being already fully constituted in itself (*actus perfecti*)."[1]

We are now in a position to see the bearing of the doctrine

[1] Sertillanges, *Thomas d'Aquin*, Vol. I, p. 79.

of Analogy, although it is necessary to anticipate the conclusions of a later chapter and to assume the existence of what is pure act and to identify it with God. The doctrine seems, as was said, to be a blend of Neo-Platonic and Christian thought with Aristotelian metaphysics. When applying it to God St. Thomas has as his book of reference the *De Divinis Nominibus* of Dionysius. For centuries Christian thinkers had been meditating on the problem of our knowledge of God, and the way in which ignorance and acquaintance could be combined. St. Thomas took over the generally accepted solution and made it more general and scientific. That does not mean that his view is always consistent or free from difficulty. He seems to have been feeling for a concise statement of it, with the result that commentators are not unanimous in their interpretation. Let us, however, see first what is certain and common.

Analogy bears on two problems; the first is concerned with the relations of beings to each other. This is known as the problem of the one and the many, or the whole and its members, or the absolute and the contingent. The second concerns predication, and the answer must show with what right we predicate being and its attributes of objects which fall outside our experience. Granted the theory of knowledge of St. Thomas, the two problems run into each other, and it will not be unfair, in a short study such as this, to take them together. St. Thomas makes a triple distinction: first, *secundum intentionem tantum et non secundum esse*, that is to say, analogy as to the mode of predication or objective concept and not as to the mode of existence. "This happens when a concept is predicated of many things *per prius et posterius* . . . although it has existence only in one; for example, health is predicated of animal, of urine, and of diet in different ways *per prius et posterius*, but not according to different modes of existence. It is the animal alone which possesses

health really. Secondly, *secundum esse et non secundum intentionem*: and this happens when several things are made uniform under one common notion, but that common notion has not the same meaning in all the real objects. For instance, all bodies are united under the common notion of body. The logician who is considering predication alone says that the name body is predicated univocally of all bodies, but the mode of existence of this nature is not identical in corruptible and incorruptible bodies. . . . *Vel secundum intentionem et secundum esse*; and this happens when neither the mode of predication nor the mode of existence is one. Being, for instance, is predicated of substance and accident, and in this case the common nature must have some mode of existence in each of the objects of which it is predicated, but it differs according to the greater or less degree of perfection in each."

The term analogous is used for what is partly the same and partly different. It stands, therefore, between the univocal and the equivocal. A univocal term has the same meaning in all the objects to which it is applied; a term is used equivocally when it has a completely different meaning in its applications. Dog, for example, is used equivocally of an animal and of the star. But when being is used of substance and accident, and of God and finite objects, then it is used in a way which is neither completely different nor completely identical; it is used analogously. If this is true, then to call the absolute a being, and to call what is finite a being, is in no way to identify them. There is a connection of some kind in reality, and there is sufficient unity to allow us to make statements which will hold true of both. But now we have to investigate further what is the ground of unity in the existent world, and what is this analogy which permits of true statements. At this point considerable differences begin to show themselves. All Thomists agree that the notion of being contains diversity and unity in it.

Other universals, such as animality, are diversified in different things by differences which lie outside the notion. The mind can, therefore, legitimately prescind from them and regard the notion as one *per se* and univocal. But this is not so with being. All the things which fall under the notion (and there is nothing which does not) have a mutual similarity in that they are beings ; but it is impossible to abstract this and to regard it as a univocal notion which is realised identically in all things. In the ordinary universal, that is, the differences lie outside the notion, and that is the reason it is univocal ; whereas all the differences of being are themselves being, and so there is no one abstract notion which is monotonously repeated and verified in the particular beings. Nevertheless there is some unity, for we are not using equivocation when we call spirit and body, substance and accident, each something. What then is the analogy ?

St. Thomas mentions two kinds of analogy, proportion or attribution and proportionality. The difference of opinion referred to above is concerned with these two. There are some who base their view on certain texts of St. Thomas and affirm that the analogy of being is one of proportion. Most Thomists, on the contrary, follow Cajetan and argue for proportionality. The first school holds that the notion of being as such can be considered abstractly as one. It is not so completely one as to be univocal, but as such it tells us nothing about the way it is diversified. We mean by it, " what can exist," just something, and this meaning perseveres through all its diversification. As St. Thomas says, " the confused notion of being does not contain in its significance any addition or any determinate grade of being, for example, substance and accident, the necessary and the contingent . . . this must be so, otherwise all other conceptions of the mind would not be gained by adding to the notion, and so there could be no further determination of being. Therefore

the confused notion of being abstracts from every kind of determinate grade of being, and consequently as a concept it is one and common to God and the creature, to substance and accident." [1] Now once the notion of being has been established as in abstraction simply one, the upholders of this view reconcile the diversity of beings with this unity in terms of proportion, or, as it is called, analogy of intrinsic attribution. The requisites for this analogy are that a common term be attributed to many objects owing to a relation subsisting between them; and this relation is of such a kind that the term belongs to one primarily and to the others secondarily in an order of subordination to the first. Now whether we take the absolute and the contingent or substance and accident, we can easily, so the authors of this view maintain, verify this form of analogy. Both substance and accident are real, but the being of an accident cannot be thought of save in reference to, and as dependent on, the being of substance.

There can be no doubt that St. Thomas does speak of this kind of analogy; [2] there can also be no doubt that in the second question of the *De Veritate* he seems to deny that it is applicable to the relation of God and creatures. By far the greater number of Thomists, for this reason and for others, refuse to accept this analogy of intrinsic attribution. Their explanation depends on proportionality. They hold that the notion of being is never simply one, as a diversity is contained in the common notion not potentially, but actually, though implicitly. Instead, then, of any proportionate identity in various beings, due to a real similarity between them, we have first of all plurality and difference and only a relative unity. The opposition of this to the former point of view has been summed up by P. Garrigou-Lagrange as follows. According to one, " the name is common, while the meaning conveyed by the name

[1] *De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1, ad 4.
[2] *V. De Potentia*, q. 7, a. 7; *Comp. Theol.*, c. 27; *Contra Gent.*, I, 34.

is relatively diverse and simply one," and according to the other, " the name is one, while the meaning conveyed by the name is simply diverse and relatively one." The unity of being is much less emphasised in the school of Cajetan ; in fact, at first sight it would seem to have affinities with Neo-Platonism, in that it puts the being of God out of all comparison with anything we know. Clearly, too, if we underestimate what is common to all the kinds of being we come to know, our knowledge snaps like a sword and we must surrender to agnosticism. On the other hand, to press the common notion of being is to overestimate our human mode of knowledge. This at least is the criticism which St. Thomas would have levelled at Spinoza and all who have identified the real and the logical. There are vast differences covered by the word being, so vast, indeed, that we cannot pass from one to the other in knowledge save in terms of proportionality. But this is enough to safeguard us against agnosticism and yield a unity for comparison.

Proportionality consists in this, that a common meaning is attributed to several things owing to a resemblance existing between two sets of relations or proportions. St. Thomas gives various examples, a metaphorical one of a smiling meadow. Here the analogy is that the meadow has a certain similarity when it is flowering to that of a man when he is smiling. An arithmetical example : six and four have something in common in that as six is the double of three, so four is the double of two. In arithmetic there is an identity in the proportions, but in being it should be noticed that this is not the case. We can argue to some form of intelligence in animals by a simple process of analogy, but we have no right to speak of its identity with ours ; in fact the argument would go to show that there is nothing more than a proportional unity in the use of the word intelligence both for animals and for men. Similarly when it is applied in metaphysics by St. Thomas. We

know ourselves and our knowledge; now knowledge is a perfection of being; therefore we can make the true though bare statement that God has knowledge; and add immediately that his knowledge will be proportionately to his complete being and actuality what our knowledge is relatively to our contingent being. Similarly with substance and accident; their being is not identical and can, indeed, never be identical, but that does not prevent us from comparing the being which they both really possess.

From this short account of the two theories of analogy the differences between the two will be apparent, and so far as authority is taken as judge there can be no doubt that St. Thomas must be taken as favouring the second form. It must be admitted that modern Thomists, while in agreement in this view, do not all represent this analogy of proportionality in the same way. As some state it, it might almost seem as if it could not be of any importance. They assume what apparently the analogy should demonstrate; that is to say, they assume that reality is at the same time one and different, and their statement of it in terms of analogy becomes nothing more than an expanded and scientific account of what is already known. On the other hand, those who steer clear of this find it no easy task to get out of proportionality all that they want. Their opponents (often those who uphold intrinsic proportion or attribution) urge that if the meaning of the word being is primarily diverse, then its unity cannot be restored save by an illicit assumption. They claim that the proportionality fails because there is no foundation for it. To take an example: God has intelligence, not indeed like ours, but proportionate to his infinite being. Then the proportion runs as follows: that as our intelligence is suited to the kind of being that is ours, so the mind of God is proportionate to his essence and existence. Now if it be granted that we have some foundation of similarity to go upon, then the analogy is informative.

But according to this school the meaning of the word being is primarily diverse ; therefore there is no foundation given except in the proportionality itself.

Many ways have been suggested out of this difficulty ; the simplest seems to be to urge that the doctrine has been radically misunderstood. In that doctrine the general term, being, was said to be in meaning primarily diverse and only relatively one. The critics fasten on to the first part of this statement as if it were the whole truth, whereas the two parts are inseparable. The notion of being, that is, covers unity as well as diversity ; it stretches from the top to the bottom. My mind and my body, my mood, my movements, my clothes, my relation to my parents and to the desk at which I am sitting, all these are not nothing ; it would be absolutely correct to call every one of them " something." They all, then, are united in being something. The pantheist and monist take this as a sign that they must be right. St. Thomas says that the differences are just as real as the unity. Is then the unity a delusion, as the complete relativists and the agnostics incline to claim ? No, says St. Thomas, you cannot be fair to reality unless you recognise a situation there in which diversity and unity are both really present ; you must, in his own words, acknowledge the analogy of being. But cannot we admit this without drawing all from it that St. Thomas does ? Kant, for instance, admits its value, and says that the relation of God to the salvation of the human race is like the relation of parents to the care of their children and can therefore be called love ; nevertheless his position is far removed from that of St. Thomas. The answer, I suppose, that the latter would have given is that Kant erred in making of the relation a " simple category." If we know reality, then analogy in our knowledge implies an analogy in the world of existences and essences. We have, by knowledge, a measuring rod, even though some of the objects far surpass our range. Of these we can have

knowledge by analogy. We are in the plight of a Helen Keller, who was deaf and dumb and blind. Our knowledge comes to us through the senses, and whatever falls outside their range has to be represented by us in terms of sense. But just as Helen Keller was able by tactile and kinæsthetic sensation to appreciate shades and tones of colour and sound, so too we are able to appreciate the meaning of what is supra- and infra-sensible by analogy. And the ground and guarantee of this is that our sensible knowledge is truly knowledge; it tells us something of the nature of reality or being, and with this peep-hole we can calculate the rest by analogy. If we consider, for instance, God and ourselves, then with the help of ourselves as a kind of stalking-horse we can ascertain something about God. The sole point of connection is in being, and in so far as the existence of both stands opposed to nothing, it has an identical meaning as used of God and ourselves. For the rest all is different since God is necessarily existent and we hold on to existence by a tenuous thread. God then can truly be called existent, though we have straightway to deny that existence means for him the same thing as it does for us. Again in the matter of essence, whatever I think of has meaning and stands opposed to what is self-contradictory. In this sense the essence of God and of all else is identical, and again all else is different. Our nature has another meaning from that of a fox or a diamond, and God cannot be defined adequately in terms of anything but himself.

In this explanation I have taken as a common denominator what is positive and yet of minimum significance in the idea of existence and essence. It is one, and perhaps a legitimate way, of expanding what St. Thomas has given us. There are, however, some Thomists who have suggested as an alternative that, instead of looking down, we should look up for the source of unity in beings. The note of incompleteness and contingency in the reality we know

tells a story and gives a direction. To that extent and to that extent alone we can say that the absolute is implicated. The absolute is not seen first nor recognised explicitly as a pattern, but reality would not be what it is in itself were there no other outstanding being which measures it; or to put this in another way, we cannot affirm any imperfection (and whenever we say "a being" we do so) without implying an order and subordination to perfection, though our knowledge of that perfection may be given wholly and solely by the imperfect but definite being. "God is not a measure who is proportioned to anything. Nevertheless he can be called the measure of everything in that everything has being to the extent in which it approaches him." And again: "from the first being and the first goodness, who is such by essence, all can be called good and being in so far as it participates by a kind of likening as a far distant effect with its cause." The foundation, then, of analogy in this view is a relation subsisting between the absolute and the finite which makes its presence felt in all our knowledge, and is responsible for what remains identical in the concept of being. As one of its exponents has stated it: "At the base of each of our concepts there is to be found, besides the indefinitely multipliable relation to concrete quantity . . . a higher relation to a transcendent absolute. In this last relation . . . the two terms brought together, far from being able ever to lose themselves in each other in a sort of equivocal entity or ultimate abstraction, remain united and opposed, as an irreducible pair; the absolute being and the defective participation in it, the *esse imparticipatum* and the *esse participatum*."

Part of what has been said belongs rather to the chapter on God, and the subject will be resumed there. In general the doctrine of analogy is nothing more than a restatement of act and potency in the light of the concept and predication. Act and potency had cleared the decks of any

theory of one substance or all-devouring unity. Being is not just a many-faced monster; the faces it shows are those of subsistent and living things and persons. The unity then, which certainly is present, must lie in some order. The order which St. Thomas finds is summed up in act and potency. This theory allows for subordination and degrees of perfection, and makes the position of each in the order not merely relative but independent, both as to existence and essence; finite substances are subjects and limited monarchies at the same time. This, therefore, is his answer to the problem of the one and the many, and it governs the whole of his philosophy. It is confirmed and amplified by the doctrine of analogy, which treats exactly the same problem with the concept as the starting point. Act and potency served to eliminate all forms of monism; analogy serves to refute agnosticism and systems which place too great or too little confidence in our concept of being. To an age-long problem his answer remains as an alternative to two extremes, a metaphysical *via media* which common sense can recognise.

§ 4. UNUM, VERUM, BONUM

In accordance with Aristotle, St. Thomas attributes certain properties to being, which are called transcendental. He enumerates five, but they do not really amount to more than three, namely, unity, truth and goodness. Everything that is, in so far as it has being, is one and true and good. Not that these add anything to being; St. Thomas calls them modes, to bring out that they are nothing else than being regarded in a certain way. Unity, for instance, is nothing but being considered in its distinctness from other things; truth is being as thought of, and goodness is being as desired. St. Thomas defined unity as " what

is undivided in itself and divided from everything else," and he adds, " for this reason it does not imply perfection, but indivision only, which belongs to each thing by its essence." A being must be something and have a nature or essence, and it cannot be that something unless it is the contradictory of nothing and distinct from other things; that is, it must be one. St. Thomas then goes on to analyse the various kinds of unity that are possible, intrinsic and extrinsic, simple and composite, essential and accidental, physical and metaphysical. Whenever we think of unity we are disposed to represent it to ourselves as quantitative. This transcendental unity is, however, far wider than the quantitative, which St. Thomas relegates to one of the categories. It belongs to all beings and is concerned with essences. With transcendental units there are only formal differences, and these are not directly subject to number. Two qualities, for instance, are not distinguished numerically save in so far as they are qualities of a material substance. Still less can spirits be numbered like soldiers in a line. Strictly speaking God is incommensurable with all else, and it would be a gross error in St. Thomas' eyes to imagine that God and a man make two, or that the whole which we suppose to include God and other things is really greater than God by himself. Nevertheless, as we are bound to compare with the help of number, St. Thomas keeps the word number for quantity, and uses the word multitude for transcendental differences. " Division is twofold. One material, which takes place in the division of the continuum, and number, which is a species of quantity is the result of this. This kind of number is confined to material things which possess quantity. The second form of division is formal, and the cause of this is opposition or diversity of form. As a result of this we have *multitude*, which does not belong to any genus but to the transcendentals, according as being is divided by the one and the many. This kind of multitude is to be found,

then, only in immaterial things." From this we see how adversely St. Thomas would have judged any attempt to define the nature of being solely by physico-mathematical methods. Being is divided by essences, and essences cannot be identified with parts in a whole. They have no common measure; their unity and difference are transcendental. But—and here his theory of knowledge helps him out—it is legitimate with safeguards, *salvis rationibus eorum*, to represent them numerically. As the congenial object of our knowledge is the sensible, we can apply abstract number to them analogically. We turn them into convicts known only by their number.

As unity is a mode of being it is possible to work out from it also some of the conclusions that have been already drawn from being. There are degrees of unity as there are of being. Matter, for instance, is at the bottom of the scale; it multiplies and extends and needs the form to make concurrently with it one thing. Again as the form is the unifying factor, wherever there is substantial unity, then there can be but one form. This, which is a favourite doctrine of St. Thomas, was as we have seen fiercely contested by his contemporaries, and the controversy is not yet ended. Lastly, consummate unity is found in God, who contains "succinct and conjoint, all narrowed to one golden point" all the perfection of being.[1]

Truth as a character of being implies the existence of a thinker. Whatever is can be thought of, and it is in this relation that St. Thomas says that truth and being are co-extensive and identical. These statements look innocent enough, but they can easily be coaxed to mean much more. All reality is intelligible, that is, it has meaning. Now if intelligibility belongs really to things, then we have

[1] There is need only to mention how closely connected this transcendental unity is with the unity of a work of art. Every work of art has to possess a unity of design or form, and we can distinguish as above between an internal and an external composition of parts.

straightway some metaphysical basis for union between mind and matter. They are not complete opposites of one another; they share something common and can intercommunicate. The definition of truth which St. Thomas generally adopts is the conformity of thing and mind. What is common to both is the form. The thing is a materialised form, and by its form intelligible. The mind is a name for that immanent activity which acquires the meanings of things according to their forms and without interference with their actual mode of existence. When it knows, it recognises the conformity of its thought with the thing. That is to say, it knows the thing as it *truly* is. We can therefore say that being is true, and that it is called true, in relation to a mind knowing it.

To round off this conception of the true it is necessary to introduce what is proved later, namely, the existence of God. The universe can be known by our minds for what it is because it is first conformed to God's mind. This is the foundation of its truth. The analogy which is apposite is that of art. The artist creates according to the ideal pattern in his mind, and the truth of the work is measured by its conformity with that ideal. Moreover the spectator can appreciate its meaning and truth in so far as his mind harmonises with that of the author. Similarly the world is the embodied expression of God's mind, a faint and far-off expression indeed, with its own laws and activities and existence, but nevertheless true to itself and to what it was intended to be. St. Thomas expresses this shortly as follows:[1] "By ideas is meant the form of things existing outside the things themselves. Now such a form can be called upon to play a double rôle; the rôle of exemplar and the rôle of principle of knowledge, inasmuch as the form of the known is said to be in the knower. Under both aspects ideas are necessary. In all things which do not come to be by

[1] Cf. Sertillanges, *St. Thomas d'Aquin*, Vol. I, p. 42.

chance, the form of the thing produced must necessarily be the end of the action of the producer. But the agent could not act in view of the form if he did not possess it in himself in a certain manner. This can happen in one of two ways. Certain agents possess the form of the product by their natural disposition ; and this is the case with material agents. Others possess the form of the product intelligibly, and this is the case with intelligent agents. . . . If, then, the world has not come to be by chance but is the product of God, and if God acts intelligently, we must posit a form in the divine mind, in the semblance of which the world has been made, and it is in this that the meaning of idea consists." If this argument sounds anthropomorphic, it should be remembered that the description is only analogic, and that St. Thomas corrects the conclusion. For the moment he is pressing the Platonic tradition as far as he can. When he deals expressly with God's knowledge, he argues that this idea in God is his essence in act. Therein are contained all possible and actual copies and editions as in their source. The actual dictates what is possible and realises it perfectly without going abroad.

The third transcendental mode of being is the good. St. Thomas was the heir of many worshippers at the shrine of this good—Plato, St. Augustine, and the pseudo-Dionysius—but his own statements are tempered by his preference for the intellect over the will, and as usual he starts with Aristotle : " The good is that which all things desire." He apologises for this vague definition, and at the same time determines its meaning by pointing out that in knowledge we have often to learn of a cause by its effect, though the cause is, in reality, prior to the effect, and should, therefore, in knowledge precede it. So, too, in this case, when we call the good the desirable, we do not mean that a thing is good because it is desirable, but that it is desirable because it is good. That is to say, there

is something in objects which makes us want them, and this character it is which goes by the name of the good. Hence, just as being in relation to the mind is the true, so in relation to the appetite it is the good. The good as conterminous with being will have diverse meanings and be only analogously one ; and again, that which possesses being completely will be at the same time most desirable, most perfect, and most actual. God is the *summum bonum*, possessor and possessed in one act ; all that is desirable he has and is in an infinite degree. Being in want of nothing, he has fruition of himself and desires nothing out of selfishness. If he diffuses good (*bonum est diffusivum sui*) then that good redounds to the credit of finite being and makes for finite excellence ; it cannot add anything to what is already personified goodness.

Below God there is finite being and with potency there is want, and want is only another word for desire. Now the object desired cannot be wanted save as perfecting or completing in some way the subject of the desire. Therefore a closer analysis of the good reveals it as that which perfects the appetite or the being with the appetite. One step further ; every being strives to be itself, to reach, in metaphysical language, its act. It is defined by its nature to be a certain sort of thing. An engine, for instance, has a certain function, and it is a good engine according as it is capable of performing that function. Our body, again, has its laws which we neglect at our peril. That is to say, that our good is to be what we ought to be, to " realise ourselves." Good, then, is another name for perfection, and we can only desire things in so far as they seem in some way to possess what will be for our good.[1]

[1] It should be carefully observed that the word, good, is used in a wider sense than that of moral good. The latter in St. Thomas' system is explained in the light of his metaphysics and as a specific form of the good discussed in the text. The difficulties in this view which have led to its rejection by so many modern philosophers will be mentioned in the chapter on Ethics.

This holds true not only of ourselves but of every being, and it is worth pointing out that just as potency has a place within being because of its association with act, so too that lack of completion which makes itself felt in desire is positive and good, by reason of the end to which it is directed.

No mention has been made of Beauty amongst the transcendentals. An attempt has been made by some modern Thomists[1] to find a place for it there, but their explanation belongs rather to what may be a legitimate development from the original texts than to the texts themselves. When dealing expressly with the supreme modes of being St. Thomas leaves out beauty, and what is still more decisive, he does not devote any attention to it among the attributes of God. The strange indifference of the saint to art is nowhere more strikingly brought out than in his neglect of opportunities to say something about the nature of beauty. In his commentary on the *Divine Names*, he is moved for a short while to interest by the pseudo-Dionysius, and we would gladly have had more. The gist of his teaching seems to be this, that beauty is not something distinct from the other transcendentals, but falls under the good, the *bonum delectabile*. Hence he describes it as that which gives pleasure on being seen. This reference to vision brings it in line with the true (being in relation to thought), and the good (being in relation to desire). It falls short of the other two, however, in that sensible vision belongs to only one small community in the realm of being. Now human knowledge —and the same could be said of human desire—even though it is limited by being human, has an absolute value. Can the same be said of our appreciation of the beautiful ? There is an object which is sensible, and there is the contemplation of it ; being seen it gives pleasure. As both are necessary, the question arises whether we have a right

[1] *V.* J. Maritain, *Art et Scholastique*.

to say that the beauty we enjoy has anything more than a relative value. Sensible nature is proportioned to our faculties, and it is this happy adjustment of colour and line to sight, and sound to the ear which gives us æsthetic pleasure. Even if this is all, the definition of St. Thomas is instructive and suggestive; it brings out this quality in æsthetic enjoyment that it is disinterested. For a moment we forget practical ends and enjoy the forms of visible things as ends in themselves.

The passage from the *Divine Names* and some other indications justify a further comment. St. Thomas lays down three conditions of beauty; they are clarity, integrity, and right proportion. If we unite this with the general doctrine that the proper object of the human mind is sensible being, we can argue for something intelligible and absolute in all beauty. Sensible objects have an intelligible form which shines out in the unity and design of the accidents. The mind, which is ever labouring inductively and discursively to arrive at a knowledge of the nature of essences, being baulked of intellectual intuition, rests in the intuition of the senses and re-creates in myriad fashion, in the various media of the senses, the secret order of the universe. For this reason a condition of the beautiful is clarity; the form must shine through the work of art as the sun through clouds or a reflection in water. Disturbance, obscurity, effort, are signs of matter and its dominance over the form, and the result is ugliness. For similar reasons the presence of integrity and right proportion are requisite. Both belong to the intelligible order. Beauty, therefore, though as sensible it is marked with relativity, has yet its source and inspiration in the cosmic order; and beauty enjoyed or created is a foretaste of that supreme vision which blinded even a Dante.

The meaning of ugliness and error and evil follows as a corollary from what has been said of the transcendentals,

and this is the proper place to treat of them. But to prevent this chapter growing too long, evil must serve as a type. The meaning attached to evil can be easily guessed. All that has being is good, and the degree of good, as of being, depends upon the supremacy of act and the absence of potency. Supreme act has no seeds of failure or disintegration in it, but of all else the sentence is true, that it might not be. At once we have the possibility of evil, for loss is possible, and evil is a form of loss. It is not, however, mere absence. The Pleiades are not as Behemoth, nor man as God, but they do not suffer evil on that account. Evil is a deprivation, the absence of what ought to be there. "Evil in a substance consists in its lack of something which it is naturally apt to have and ought to have. It is no evil to a man not to have wings, because he is not by nature apt to have them; nor not to have yellow hair, because, though his nature is apt to have such hair, still that colour of hair is not due to his nature. But it is an evil to him not to have hands, because he is by nature apt to have them, and ought to have them, if he is to be perfect; and yet the same is no evil to a bird."[1] If then evil is not anything positive, there can clearly be no principle of evil; there cannot even be anything which is wholly evil. It has no meaning save in reference to an existing good, and it cannot be caused except by what is good. To quote some illustrations from Cardinal Mercier: "A baby's attempts to walk fail because its muscular strength is insufficiently developed; a lame man's because his locomotive system is incomplete. The instrument of the artist is perfect, but if there be a flaw in the wood he is chiselling, the statue will be defective."

[1] *Contra Gent.*, III, 3.

§ 5. CAUSALITY

There is no need to point out how closely this theory of evil follows the main theses of the Thomist philosophy already laid down. Once grant that knowledge is of being and that that being is an intelligible and real object of the mind with its laws and stratification, then St. Thomas is right in co-ordinating in a metaphysical system the data of experience and looking for the ultimate explanation of terms such as truth, goodness, evil, end and causality at the level of metaphysics. This is conspicuously the case with causality, to which we must now turn. A disciple of St. Thomas will always contend, rightly or wrongly, that many of the difficulties raised against the existence and nature of causality are due to the Nominalist heresy, to the failure to acknowledge forms and essences as really existing. St. Thomas, like Aristotle, studies cause as a condition of being; he asks what it is necessary by the very principle of contradiction to affirm for a thing to be intelligible; and proceeding on this method he lays down four requisites or causes. These well-known four causes—the formal, the material, the final, and the efficient—are not then primarily the data of sensible experience, but objective conditions of knowledge. We have already discussed the two former and shown how St. Thomas tries to establish their necessity. Efficient causality springs out of the distinction of act and potency. Wherever there is change and becoming, wherever, indeed, essence and existence are distinct, and a being does not contain necessary existence in the definition of its nature, there dependence is in one way or another implied. This indigence and lack of self-sufficiency in what nevertheless has being, compel us to assign an external cause for this being. We may say, then, that causality is nothing but the

application to the real world of the principle of sufficient reason. A cause is that by which something is what it is, act presiding over the possible or determining what already is to be something else.

There are some who ridicule the Thomistic conception of efficient cause as crude and materialistic, as a kind of push or force handed on from cause to effect. This is unfair comment. An opposite criticism is more to the point. St. Thomas is so occupied with cause as a metaphysical notion that he borrows very little from experience to enlighten us as to its nature. Some of his followers have thought to improve upon his statements by arguing from our internal experience of causality and transferring it to the external world. This is not the way of St. Thomas. For help he prefers to fall back upon the dictum of Aristotle that *actio est in passo* (that action is in the object affected).[1] With subtle penetration he avers, in the words of the same commentator : " That it is nothing inherent in the agent which gives it the name of agent, but the fact that there is something happening in the patient which is dependent upon it. And similarly there is nothing inherent in the patient to give it the name of patient, properly speaking ; it is the fact that what is happening to it is dependent upon another. . . . But if one asks what is the nature of the connection which establishes this order of dependence, how it is that the agent can make something come to pass in the patient . . . then we must confess that ' the making ' can only be understood by an appeal to the idea of law. Being has for its law to act. . . . An order of phenomena ruled and concatenated by laws, such is the Thomistic causality. . . . St. Thomas always says that activity is nothing but the manifestation of form, that furthermore form is the principle of being, and since being resolves itself into substance and accident, that accident acts only in virtue

[1] *V.* Sertillanges, *op. cit.*, I, p. 121 ff.

of the substance, and that substance, as to its form, is the real idea, the static and evolving plan of realisation; finally, since all this is nothing but an emanation in perpetual dependence on its source, and this for us is nothing but imperative reason or law in the two senses of the word, we see once again that everything in acting and moving nature is order, idea, relation, and law."

The necessity of a final cause is as certain to St. Thomas as that of an efficient cause, and, as before, he finds the grounds for his belief in his metaphysics. What has been said about the transcendental notion of the good will absolve us from a prolonged exposition of the meaning and justification of final causes. If act be the highest expression of being, and if all beings are of a determinate form with a proper perfection possessed or to be attained, then it is easy to see how it is unthinkable for St. Thomas to consider being without the complementary notion of end. There are few subjects which interest him more than that of final cause. I suspect that his thoughts grouped themselves and defiled before him under that standard. The Christian ideal which permeated his mind gives him an horizon and a sureness of outlook which Aristotle never possessed in this matter. A few quotations must suffice to indicate his thought. He lays down repeatedly that every movement is directed to an end, "that every agent must necessarily act with an end in view." To deny this is to take all meaning out of the world, to pass like Alice into Wonderland. "To an agent that did not tend to any definite effect, all effects would be indifferent. But what is indifferent to many things, does not do one of them rather than another; hence from an agent to whom both sides of an alternative are open, there does not follow any effect, unless by some means it comes to be determined to one above the rest; otherwise it could not act at all. Every agent, therefore, tends to some

definite effect, and that is called an end."[1] This end is present in the agent either consciously or unconsciously. In the latter case it is effective in the tendency itself and in the form of the tendency. "In order that the agent should produce a definite effect, it must necessarily be determined to something certain which has the character of end. Now as in a rational nature this determination is due to a rational appetite which is called the will, so in other things it is due to a natural inclination which is called the natural tendency (*appetitus*)."[2] In another passage he explains this in terms of form. "In all things which are not produced by chance, the form must necessarily be the end of the cause producing. But the agent would not act with the form in view unless the similitude of the form were in it. This happens in two ways; in some agents the form which is to come to be pre-exists in its natural essence, as in those things which act by force of nature. . . . In some others, however, in its intelligible essence. This is the case with agents which act intellectually; for instance, the similitude of the house pre-exists in the mind of the architect; and this can be called the idea of the house."[3] The application of this to the ideal in an artist's mind, which slowly formulates itself by experiment and failure, and drives him on to ever new and more appropriate expressions of it, has been worked out with considerable skill by some modern Thomists, and they have then further applied it to the love of God, the craving for the absolute, the growing-pains of the mind in its science and philosophy. Knowledge is, so to speak, examined from the inside and made to reveal an internal finality. For the moment we must be content to leave the matter with the more prosaic saying of St. Thomas: "It must be that all the things which man seeks, he seeks for the sake of his ultimate end."

[1] *Contra Gent.*, III, 2. [2] *S. Theol.*, I, IIae, a. 1, 2.
[3] *Ibid.*, q. 15.

§ 6. ACCIDENTS AND INDIVIDUALITY

The one part of the metaphysical system of which little or nothing has so far been said, is accidental being. For the most part St. Thomas follows Aristotle closely and accepts the division and analysis of the categories: "To substance it belongs not to exist in another, to accident it belongs to exist in another";[1] and again, "to substance belongs whatever is essential to the thing, but not anything which falls outside the essence. . . ."[2] In his account of the various types of accident there are two theories which merit attention, as they have given rise to much criticism. The first is the theory of individuation. According to St. Thomas, in substances which are composed of matter and form, the form is individuated by what he calls *materia signata quantitate*. This phrase means, to use a translation of Dr. Wicksteed, that matter is earmarked or that space is occupied. As we have already learnt, forms which are subsistent must be specifically different, whereas forms which are united with matter are multipliable. There are many geese and there are many men, and yet so far as the form is concerned, every goose is the same, and Boswell as much a man as Dr. Johnson. What, then, makes one man to be different from another although their nature is the same? There can be but one answer in this system; it is matter and matter as quantified. When I take matches out of a box, I see, according to the advertisement, about fifty objects, all identical in function and nature. Yet one match is not another; they can be counted as different. *Nos numerus sumus*; they are divided off from each other by each being a definite quantified bit of matter. To appreciate this at its proper worth, it must be recalled that in the Thomist

[1] *Quodlibet.*, IX, q. 3, a. 5. [2] *S. Theol.*, I, q. 77, a. 1.

system it is matter which divides and multiplies and lies on the other side of intelligibility. When, then, St. Thomas has to find a principle which adds nothing to the formal or intelligible side of an existent being, he naturally turns to matter, as it is just what he wants. We must also remember not to think of matter and form as beings apart from their collusion; together they make up the material thing; apart, they are nothing but abstractions. The failure to keep this in mind has been responsible for half the difficulties which have been raised against the theory. There is, for example, no such thing as goldness existing. What exist are concrete pieces of gold; the notion of gold contains within it an intrinsic reference to definite quantified matter.

But a very serious difficulty remains. The theory may sound plausible when examples are chosen in which individuality seems to be of little importance. Two matches or two pins are much the same, but the higher we go the more does individuality increase in importance, until in human beings we reach the stage when the type is lost in the glories of personality. Furthermore—and this is a still more formidable difficulty—how is it possible to reconcile this doctrine with the nature and future existence of the human soul? Many scholastic writers, feeling the seriousness of this difficulty, have deserted St. Thomas on this point, but it is doubtful whether one can call oneself a Thomist without holding his theory. The doctrine seems to be an integral part of the system, and the reader can judge for himself from what has been said about form and its relation to essence and act, whether individuation in material things must not be due to the causes stated. Again, the theory of knowledge and the universal leads up to the same doctrine. Those who deny it are forced to say that the universal, say of humanity, is gained by a comparison of a number of singulars. What is common to these will, after much study, be set up as the universal

humanity. According to St. Thomas the universal is given in every particular, that is to say, the object is known as a form concreted and individuated ; seeing a certain being I know him as a man, and when I turn from John to James I recognise him also as another example of the type I have already seen.

The general theory, also, with its hierarchy of being, appears to lend support to the difference which separates the individuality of a pin and a human person. That hierarchy was ranged in order of merit according to what may be called a law of dissipation and concentration. The lowest of beings had scarcely any unity or interior life, while the highest below pure act possessed such a unity and rich interior life that the whole nature flowered in one perpetual act. An angel in St. Thomas' scheme is self-reliant, self-possessed, a universe to itself, and in the radiance of its own consciousness it enjoys instantaneously more than all mankind has experienced dividedly and successively through time and space. The reader will recall the emphasis throughout the theory of knowledge and the metaphysics on immanence. Owing to the absence of immanent activity the differences between individuals in the inanimate world were reckoned unimportant. But as soon as we reach life, there is increasing intelligibility and immanence. The unity of organisation approaches nearer to the ideal of a self. Self means that one does not merely belong to another, that one is not just a unit making up an order or a universal. Self means self-regard and consequently consciousness, and consciousness, surprisingly enough, brings us back to form, as it is in form that the intelligible resides. An angel, be it remembered, could be described as a form or intelligible nature conscious to itself. Now in this hierarchy the human soul is just below pure spirit ; it has such an immanent life that it is self-conscious, and therefore immaterial and substantial. But it is only

incompletely substantial by itself, and it is self-conscious only with the help of the senses and the body.

The existence, therefore, of an immanent and intelligible life in human individuals is in harmony with the general philosophy of St. Thomas. Nevertheless he is bound to assign individuation to matter. I do not know of any place where he tries to reconcile the two positions nor of any recognition of the difficulty; but probably he would have tried to solve it on the lines suggested in the preceding paragraph. We have to admit that human nature occupies a peculiar and privileged position in the system, just because it marks the transition from the material to the spiritual. Human beings have a body and they can be numbered. Now we have seen that number implies matter; therefore if James and John are each a man and also two men, they are separate and individuated by matter that is "earmarked."

The relation between matter and form, and individuation and personality, will become clearer after answering the second difficulty about immortality. That difficulty is of the following kind: St. Thomas holds firmly the doctrine of the immortality of the human soul, and gives several arguments for it. But if the soul is individuated by matter, then in its survival after death it will have no individuality at all. St. Thomas ought then, so it is said, to deny immortality, or, if he holds to it, to devise another theory of the relation of the soul to the body. On the other hand, there are those who go so far as to say that the theory of the soul is the *chef d'œuvre* of St. Thomas' system. In that theory the soul is most intimately united to the body.[1] Many of his contemporaries regarded the soul as a fully constituted substance inhabiting the body, directing it, and hampered by it, and, in the end, more fully real when absolved from it. This way of stating the relation between the body and the soul is still common among philo-

[1] Cf. Ch. VIII, p. 205.

sophers, and despite its apparent simplicity it gives rise to very grave problems. St. Thomas utterly rejected it and chose instead the Aristotelian explanation according to which body and soul together constitute one human being in the manner of matter and form. The soul informs the whole body, determining it and unifying it, just as we might say that a clock is no invisible anatomy in the interior of the works but the very form of the mechanism. So far, then, as it falls into place with other physical examples of matter and form, there is no room for immortality; in fact, the conception of form apart is ridiculous. St. Thomas does, nevertheless, make an exception for the form of a human being, and that (and this is most important to remember) without denying the function of the soul as form. The reason he gives for making it an exception is that the form is not merely intelligible but intelligent, in other words, that it has the power of self-reflection. This power of holding oneself at arm's length, of standing outside oneself, involves a principle which is immaterial. The form has freed itself from the particularity of the matter it determines; if it is still localised it is also infinite in power, as it can contemplate all things and apprehend absolute values, truth and beauty and goodness. Like the fish in the sea of Salamis it can leap above the waters to greet the rising sun; it can, in a word, become all things instead of being confined as other material forms to a circumscribed space and time.

Thence St. Thomas deduces its immortality, and if asked what sort of individuality that soul can possess, he could answer by referring to that immanent personal life suggested above, or, as he prefers, by reminding the questioner of the intimate union of soul and body. If we picture the form as a roll of cloth, which is already cloth and only waiting the scissors to be cut up into pieces, then, indeed, the character of the disembodied soul will make a puzzle. But this is a mistaken view. There is no

ready-made soul awaiting the advent of a body. What St. Thomas says is that human nature cannot be thought of except as soul and body together, and therefore to think of a soul is necessarily to think of it in a determinate, or as it is called, transcendental relation to a particular body. He explains this excellently in the *Contra Gentiles*.

"It is not any and every diversity of form that makes a difference of species. The fact of souls separated from their bodies making a multitude follows from their forms being different in substance, inasmuch as the substance of this soul is different from the substance of that. But this diversity does not arise from the souls differing in their essential constitution, but from their being differently commensurate with different bodies; for one soul is commensurate with one body and not with another. These commensurations remain in souls even when their bodies perish, as the substances of the souls also remain, not being dependent on their bodies for their being. For it is by their substances that souls are forms of bodies; otherwise they would be united with their bodies only accidentally, and soul and body would not make up an essential, but only an accidental, unity. But inasmuch as they are forms they must be commensurate with their bodies. Hence it is clear that their several different commensuratenesses remain in the departed souls and consequently plurality."[1]

Though it does not belong properly to the subject of this chapter, it is worth adding that besides the individuation spoken of, and the immanent activity of self-consciousness, there are what St. Thomas calls *principia individuantia*. The body in which the soul is incorporated varies in its temperament and dispositions in each individual. "The

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 80. Cf. also a concise treatment of the same problem in the *De Ente et Essentia*, c. 6: "And so Avicenna says that the individuation and multiplication of souls depends on the body for its source but not for its end (*quantum ad sui principium sed non quantum ad sui finem*)."

individual matter, with all the accidents which individuate it, does not fall within the definition of the species; for we do not include in the definition of man this flesh and these bones, or whiteness or blackness or anything of this kind. Hence this flesh and these bones, and the accidents which mark off this matter, do not fall within humanity. Nevertheless they are included in what is a man; therefore that which is a man has in it something which humanity has not got."[1] It seems clear from this that the peculiarities of men are attributed to the body or the matter; and St. Thomas expressly says so, and furthermore he allows that moral perceptions and intellectual ability are greatly affected by bodily dispositions. "It is clear that the better disposed the body is the better is the soul that falls to its lot; and this is obvious in those things which are specifically diverse. The reason is that act and form are received in matter according to the capacity of the matter. Hence it is also that men who have a better disposed body, possess a soul with a greater power of intelligence."[2] He takes over the remark of Aristotle that a thick skin means an insensitive soul; and in fact he would yield to the physicist and the biologist almost as much as they are apt to claim for the influence of body on mind and conduct. He is able to do this without misgiving because of his doctrine of matter and form and their substantial unity in one human being. Quite sure of the existence of a soul with an immaterial function, he is, for the rest, almost a materialist in that he always looks for a material explanation of the differences between man and man.

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 3, a. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, q. 85, a. 7.

§ 7. RELATION

To pass now to the subject of relation, in so far as it falls under the categories. His doctrine here again has given rise to much criticism even among scholastic writers, and is by no means generally accepted. The peculiarity of his view is that he refuses to reduce relation to terms of anything else than itself ; it belongs to the real order and is a unique kind of entity. The relation that two colours, for instance, have with one another is not dependent on a mind perceiving and comparing them, it is not just the quality of blue inhering in two subjects which can suffice as an explanation, though the quality is necessary as a foundation for the relationship. In maintaining this St. Thomas is referring to relations in which both the terms are real and really distinct. Omitting transcendental relations, which are not here in question, St. Thomas distinguishes three classes. In one the relation is real from one side only ; from the other it is what he calls a *relatio rationis*. This occurs when the relation lies between things of different orders. For instance, in knowledge the existent object has no real relation with its being known, though the knowing is in a real relation to the object. " The object is said to be in relation, not because it is itself related, but because something else is related to it." Again : " God is the measure of all beings. He is to them as the object is to our knowledge, that is to say, its measure." So although we are really related to God, " God is not otherwise related to things that actually are than to things that potentially are, because he is not changed by producing anything." [1] The second class is of relations which are purely *rationis*. This includes all cases where the relation is one of identity, " man is a rational

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 12.

animal" ; where again there is nothing real corresponding to the language we are using, as " a loaf of bread is better than nothing," and lastly in the employment of species and genera. The third class alone involves a real relation from both sides. Quantity belongs to both a horse and the weight on the weighing-machine, and so, too, when we compare qualities or cause and effect, we assume that there is something common forming a basis for the relationship.

St. Thomas analyses this third class of relation into three elements : There is, first, the real subject which is related ; there is, secondly, the real and distinct term to which the subject is related ; and, thirdly, there is the real foundation of the relation. He defines predicamental relation as that real accident whose whole essence it is to bear on something else. As existing, it is an accident adhering in a subject (*esse in*), such as quantity or quality, but its nature or essence is not to quantify or qualify but to refer to some other term (*esse ad*). Therefore we can distinguish the foundation, of the real relation, for example, sovereignty, the relation existing independently of the mind (*esse in*), that is in this case the existence of both subjects and sovereign, and lastly the relation between the two as apprehended by the mind.[1] Kant would say that the relation did not exist without the mind ; Duns Scotus and many others say that given the subject, the term and the foundation, all that is required for a relation is given, and that it is absurd to posit an extra entity called a relation. St. Thomas says that we must admit that the relation subsisting, for example, between sovereign and subjects, is something of itself, and not therefore covered by the subject, term and the foundation (*esse in*). One reason

[1] Lest the example chosen mislead, it should be noticed that the subject of relations is always the integral substance. A relation is an *esse in*—and so an accident of a subject, not a subject itself. Hence one substance is related to another substance, and by these relations the objective order of the universe is constituted.

for this at first sight disconcerting view is that the reality of relation is not otherwise adequately safeguarded, and if it be said that it breaks the rule of not multiplying entities without necessity, the answer is that to explain relation by anything else is, in effect, to leave it out. Much confusion is caused by our tendency to picture every kind of being as a petty substance. Even the word entity lends itself to this mistake, but just as a quality or attribute is not substantial, so too a relation is not merely an attribute ; it has just that tenuous hold on reality that is given by the reference of one thing to another. It cannot exist without a foundation and terms any more than the smile of the Cheshire cat without the cat, but it does not do, according to St. Thomas, to absorb it in them. What he has in mind is the reality of order. Just as an army is composed of units in such a way as to make a real order, so the various items in the universe are so constituted as to form an order which the human mind discovers and does not create. It is a fact of experience that we may have all the data without seeing their interconnection, all the members of a whole, without seeing the whole. A face is more than the features, and a tall ship more than the spars with which she is built. " God is a geometer," and has left it to the human mind to discover the hidden proportions and harmony of the universe.

CHAPTER VI

THE EXISTENCE AND NATURE OF GOD

In the preceding chapter the name of God occurred many times as synonymous with what St. Thomas meant by pure act or completest being. It was necessary to make this assumption in order to bring out the import of the chief metaphysical principles. It was nevertheless an assumption ; neither the existence of God was proved nor the identification of God with pure act. To some, indeed, any proof might appear unnecessary granted the premisses of the metaphysics, as the division of being into act and potency generated naturally the series of pure act, essences, form and matter. Those who think in this way are inclined to favour the ontological argument and criticise St. Thomas for rejecting it. The majority, more probably, will ask for a proof not only that God exists, but that the name of God can be identified in any way with this Aristotelian and somewhat impersonal pure act

Various references in the works of St. Thomas show that there were views about God, current at his time, which have quite a modern ring. One was to the effect that God was within us and so can be immediately apprehended without the need of argument. This, which has a perpetual appeal and many different guises, can be called the argument from experience. To it St. Thomas replies in effect that however vivid and compelling the experience may be, it must pass the censor of reflection and reasoning before it can be authorised as true, and he makes the interesting suggestion that this experience (shall we say of the holy ?) is only the interior counterpart of the argument drawn

from external reality ; that is to say, both are arguments from dependence or in other words from effect to cause. According to another contemporary view, God is the first object of knowledge, and all else is seen in his light or because of him. This may be paralleled by the statement that all our knowledge is true in so far as it accords with the absolute or absolute truth. Some modern Thomists are of opinion that there are elements of truth in this view, though as stated in the way just mentioned it is a gross error. Be that as it may, there can be no doubt that St. Thomas did not accept it in the above-mentioned form. God, he says, is first in order of existence and causality, but he is not first for us in order of discovery. He is by his nature first in intelligibility, but it does not follow that he is the most easily understood by us. Faithful to his theory of knowledge, St. Thomas holds that we start with sensible reality, and that it is only from finite existent being thus revealed that we can argue to the existence of God.

For the same reason he reluctantly puts on one side the ontological argument of St. Anselm. That argument is to this effect, that the notion is formed in the mind by whoever hears the name, " God," of one than whom nothing greater can be thought. Now such a being cannot be a notion merely, for what is in the mind and in reality is greater than that which is in the mind only ; but nothing is greater than God, as the meaning of the name shows ; therefore God cannot be merely a notion, but must really exist. To this argument St. Thomas replies : " The existence of God is not necessarily self-evident as soon as the meaning of the name ' God ' is known. First, because it is not self-evident, even to all who admit the existence of God, that God is something than which nothing greater can be conceived, since many of the ancients said that this world was God. Then granting that universal usage understands by the name ' God ' something than which nothing

greater can be conceived, it will not follow that there exists *in rerum natura* something than which nothing greater can be conceived. For 'thing' and 'notion implied in the nature of the thing' must answer to one another. From the conception in the mind of what is declared by this name 'God,' it does not follow that God exists otherwise than in the mind. Hence there will be no necessity either of that something, than which nothing greater can be conceived, existing otherwise than in the mind; and from this it does not follow that there is anything *in rerum natura* than which nothing greater can be conceived. And so the supposition of the non-existence of God goes untouched. For the possibility of our thought outrunning the greatness of any given object, whether of the actual or of the ideal order, has nothing in it to vex the soul of any one except of him alone who already grants *in rerum natura* the existence of something than which nothing greater can be conceived."

At the root of this argument against St. Anselm is the conviction that man has no intuition of God. I have already noted before the dislike St. Thomas always shows for what is called experience as opposed to reason. In theology, in psychology, in art and in ethics he prefers to start with the object and not with the subject. That is what is known first, and it is in this knowledge of what is not ourselves that we grow in knowledge of ourselves. As ever he clings to that pregnant formula, that "the known in act is the knowing in act." We do not know ourselves first substantially, and then the external world, nor lighting up our consciousness and this external world is there any immediate presence of God. Again, limited creatures that we are, we have no guarantee that every conception of ours belongs to the existent world. As we do not possess intuition, truth for us is not in the concept but in the judgment. Now it is in sensible experience that our knowledge begins; it is then and there that we affirm

the existence of real objects. Consequently it is from such beings that we must argue to the existence of a divine being, if such an argument can be produced. When, then, in the preceding chapter it was said that the contingent implied the absolute, potency existent act, for the argument to apply to the existent order and to have any force as a proof for the existence of God, it is necessary to start with some really existing contingent thing. Once we have gained a *pied-à-terre* in the realm of being, we can map out the nature of the country with the help of the laws of being, and perhaps discover the necessity of God.

There are many signs to show that St. Thomas had, amongst his principal aims, the construction of a proof for the existence of God which would defy attack. His Christian faith naturally led him to wish to do this ; but besides, it was incumbent on him, as a strenuous supporter of the Aristotelian philosophy, to show that it was not, as was sometimes said, incompatible with theism. This was all the more necessary, because it is by no means clear that Aristotle recognised as legitimate the use to which St. Thomas was prepared to put his principles. The arguments are to be found most magisterially set down in the *Summa Theologica*. They are five in number : " The first and clearer way is the one taken from motion. It is certain, and testified to by the sense that something in this world is moved. But everything that is moved is moved by something other than itself. For nothing is moved except in so far as it is in potency towards that to which it is moved. Now a thing moves in so far as it is actuality. For to move means precisely to lead something out of potency to actuality." Then, after an example, he continues : " It is therefore impossible that anything can be from the same standpoint both mover and moved, or that it can move itself. Hence everything that is moved must be moved by another." Having reached this point, he then argues that we cannot go on *ad infinitum*, and so

must arrive at a first mover who is unmoved. "And by this all men understand God." To prevent misunderstanding it should be noted that he is not, despite appearances, arguing from the impossibility of an infinite series. He means that the addition of dependent things *ad infinitum* will do nothing to get rid of the dependence. This comes out in the second argument.

"The second way starts from the nature of efficient cause. In our sensible world we all see an order of efficient causes. But we never find, and it is impossible, that anything is its own efficient cause; for it were then existing before itself, which is impossible. Nor is it possible to proceed *ad infinitum* in the series of efficient causes, for in any series of efficient causes the first is the cause of the intermediary and the intermediary the cause of the last, no matter whether the intermediary consists of one or more causes. Now take away the cause and there will be no effect. Hence, if in any series there were no first cause, there should also be no last and no intermediary." The argument then proceeds as the first.

"The third way proceeds from the possible and the necessary, and is as follows: We see some things in the world that could either be or not be, since things come into being and disappear, whence it is possible for them to be and likewise not to be. But it is impossible that everything of such a nature can exist for ever, since that which can also not be, at some time is not." He then goes on to show that for anything to be possible there must be a necessary being.

These three arguments are clearly very similar, and they are intended to be similar. St. Thomas, as has been said, is looking for a proof of God based on what to him was most certain, his metaphysical principles. Therefore we notice that in each he starts with sensible experience, and because the theory of matter and form originated from an analysis of movement, he gives pride of place here amongst his proofs to the argument from movement. No

doubt he is indebted to the Aristotelian scientific conceptions, which he like many others of his time accepted.[1] And to estimate them at their true worth it is very necessary to consider them independently of the obsolete physics which obscures them. St. Thomas almost always speaks in guarded terms of the science of his day, whereas he has supreme confidence in his metaphysics—and it is clear that he sought for an irrefragable proof of the existence of God. Furthermore it is easy to see the workings of his mind in the very order of the proofs. He starts with the first and most common phenomenon of being, change. The world that we know is in movement : it is composed of matter and form. The inter-relation of the subjects of movement is due to cause and effect ; moreover, in this world of cause and effect, substances are for ever perishing and coming to be ; what is possible is realised, and therefore itself lacks, the while it implies, necessity.

The third and fourth proofs are prolongations of the

[1] The argument from motion, as stated in the *Compendium Theologiæ*, Ch. III and Ch. IV, gives a better idea of the physics on which St. Thomas relied. " Every movement seems to proceed from something unmoved, that is to say, not moved by the same kind of motion as the first. We see, for instance, that the changes and the coming-to-be and ceasing which belong to the inferior things are brought under the heavenly body as under a first mover, which is not moved by the same kind of movement, as it is ungenerated and incorruptible and unalterable." St. Thomas accepted the belief of nine concentric spheres of a higher order of reality than the world we inhabit, and upon them depended the motion of our world. This idea played a great part in Neo-Platonism with its theory of intermediaries. According to Aristotle, they had their own proper motion and were endowed with life and yearning for the supreme moved one. St. Thomas was, I think, sceptical towards some of this, he did not see how these celestial bodies could be animated, and by assigning to the angels the function of moving the spheres, he was able to borrow the substance of the doctrine without its inconveniences. In his first two proofs he is thinking of the subordination of the movements of this corruptible world to the relatively unmoved spheres. In the third proof he profits by a suggestion of Avicenna. Aristotle had called the spheres eternal and necessary in contrast with the temporal and contingent nature of things composed of perishable matter and form. St. Thomas says that the former are necessary relatively to the latter, but they do not possess the necessity of God because their essence and existence are distinct.

same line of thought. "The fourth way is taken from the different grades we find in things. For we find in things that which is more and that which is less good, true, noble, etc. But more and less are predicated of different things, in so far as in different degrees they approach that which is most; as a thing is warmer when it is more like that which is most warm. Hence something exists that is the truest, best, noblest, and consequently also the greatest being. For what is most supremely true is also most supremely being, as is stated in the second book of Metaphysics. Now that which in any genus is called such-and-such a thing in the supremest degree, is also the cause of all others pertaining to that genus; just as fire, which is the warmest, is the cause of all warmth, as Aristotle says in the same passage. Hence there must be something that is the cause of being, of goodness, and every perfection in all things, and this we call God." The strength and precise meaning of this proof are not too easy to perceive. The illustration from warmth is not to be taken seriously. St. Thomas has in mind the Platonic forms corrected in Aristotle and by the Augustinian tradition. With these in mind he attempts to employ the analogy of being in the way of a proof. There are certain attributes, the true, the good, for instance, which belong to every grade of being, and are actually present in existent beings. Now here we have a perfection in many instances and participated in in more and less degrees. The multiplicity does not explain itself and demands explanation in terms of unity, as Plato saw. On the other hand this unity cannot be one of abstract perfection subsisting by itself. It must be identical with and be possessed by being. Secondly, where there are degrees of perfection, measured as more and less, existing in a subject, there also must be that perfection existing absolutely in a subject which measures them. This subject or being is God.

"The fifth way is taken from the subjection of things to guidance. We see that many things possessing no knowledge, namely physical objects, act towards a goal; which follows from the fact that they are always, or almost always, active in the same way in order to attain that which is best. From this it follows that they attain their goal not by accident but purposively. But that which has no knowledge tends towards a goal only through guidance by a being that has knowledge and reason, like the arrow of an archer. Hence an intelligent being exists by whom all things of nature are directed towards their goal, and this we call God." This, which is known as the argument from design, has been elaborated in various ways by other thinkers, but it is sufficiently clear as just stated to need little comment. The fourth proof depended upon an order in being of participation; this fifth proof rests upon the existence in being of definite essences, with definite natures and a definite perfection. St. Thomas does not appeal to external design but to an internal finality. The notion of end is not for him a conjecture or hypothesis; it is rooted in the very conception of being, and is in fact another word for essence and nature; to remove it is to remove all possibility of definition and science.

The arguments, therefore, for the existence of God, all move on a different plane from that which is sometimes supposed. They depend upon the truth of the metaphysics already outlined, and the distinction between the intelligible and the sensible, and consequently they ought to remain untouched in their essence by the discoveries of the empirical sciences. They are all aspects of one and the same argument, which can in conclusion be summarised as follows. All knowledge has for its object something or some being. According to St. Thomas our first awareness of this something, which is not ourselves, is in sensible experience. Once introduced to being we can be certain that whatever is not nothing must obey its laws

on pain of being nothing or falling into contradiction. Now change belongs to the world of our experience, and change implies that a thing is not yet what it can be. Such a condition again implies contingence, because to be able to lose what one has and to acquire what one has not denotes an incompleteness in oneself, or in other words the absence of full being. We have, then, existent beings which are contingent and as such do not contain a sufficient reason and explanation in themselves for what they are. There must, therefore, be existent a being which explains them, and at the same time is its own sufficient reason and explanation; that is to say, a being who, as being, is not contingent or dependent or in any way lacking in completeness of being. This for the moment we define as God.

The first three proofs have, for their conclusion, that there exists a being who is changeless and author of all change, necessary and absolute. When, then, the majority of Thomists define the metaphysical essence of God[1] as *ipsum esse subsistens* (subsistent being), they are, I think, most in accord with their master's mind, as he quotes to his purpose the text of Scripture, "I am Who am," and declares that in God essence and existence are identical. Now though the fourth and the fifth proofs bring in the attributes of goodness and intelligence, it may seem that the result is a very jejune one and that the God of St. Thomas is hardly distinguishable from the God of Spinoza and the Absolute of Hegel. Likenesses based on condensed summaries are generally superficial because of the inability of language, which abstracts when it unifies, to convey the differences. When the abstract language of St. Thomas is articulated and its meaning unfolded, it

[1] By the metaphysical essence of God is meant that which in our concept constitutes him as he is, and is the source of all other attributes. Some scholastics hold it to be infinity, others actual knowledge, while others again say that it is to be an *ens a se*.

will be seen that there is a world of difference between his conception of God and that of the aforesaid philosophers. By his theory of knowledge he is able to show that abstractness of language does not necessarily mean a vague and impersonal reality. Unfortunately owing to the nature of our thought the name " being " covers at once the minimum and the maximum of significance, just as the phrase, " I am Who am," means little to the philistine and almost everything to the mystic, as in fact the *ipsum esse* of St. Thomas spelt everything for Master Eckhart and Henry Suso and others of the great mystics. What, then, St. Thomas has tried to do is to concentrate in a word or phrase all that is highest and best and personal, and in the same way that his theory of knowledge justifies this, so too his metaphysical principles enable him to separate the *ipsum esse* from all other beings and to attribute to it characteristics, such as life, intelligence, power and love, which reveal it as no other than the God who is worshipped in the Christian faith.

There are two kinds of demonstration, says St. Thomas, which it is important to distinguish, especially in theology. The first ends in a judgment of fact (*quia est*), the second shows how and why a thing is what it is (*propter quid est*). The arguments for the existence of God are of the first kind, and they are justified in the eyes of St. Thomas because they infer from existent limited being that being " without spot or wrinkle " must also exist, and it is easy to show that it must be *a se* and an *esse subsistens*. Here is the point of difference between St. Thomas and Kant, and " all those who say that the existence of God is a tenet of faith alone and cannot be demonstrated."[1] The latter tends to affirm that the dissimilarity between God and the objects of experience is too great, and that no more can be attributed to the cause than is strictly required to explain the effect ; as the effect is finite the cause too must be finite.

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 12.

The answer of St. Thomas to this is that knowledge is not confined to sensible experience, but is of reality. Given that a certain being exists, we know enough of the nature of being to infer that a being whose essence and existence are identical must also exist. The mistake of the adversary is to suppose that the argument is of the *propter quid est* kind. In this there must be some likeness in nature between what we already know and what we come to know, whereas " in the reasonings whereby the existence of God is proved it is not necessary to assume for a premiss the essence or quiddity of God ; but instead of the quiddity the effect is taken for a premiss, as is done in demonstrations *a posteriori* from effect to cause." The root of the error is the assumption that being is a genus or species like those which fall within it, and that consequently from a finite one can infer nothing but what is finite. The truth is that the conception of being does not exclude the infinite and transcendent, though the existence of such a being awaits proof. Being is analogical, and it is permissible, therefore, to infer from what we know to exist another existence which has nothing in common with the former save an analogy of proportion. As St. Thomas says : " the axiom that in God essence and existence are the same is to be understood of the existence whereby God subsists in himself, the manner of which is unknown to us, as also is his essence ; not of the existence which signifies an affirmative judgment of the understanding."[1]

The quotation just given shows that St. Thomas is prepared to be very modest in his claim that the human mind can know God. A modern Thomist has defined the position excellently when he writes : " We must clearly understand that what we have to define and render intelligible is not God himself but the world. The problem of God is nothing else in the last resort than the problem

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 12.

of the world and of life." This is nothing but a commentary on the words of St. Thomas, which give the gist of his teaching: "We do not know what God is, we know only what he is not and what relation everything else bears to him."[1] Instead, then, of being a dogmatist as is sometimes supposed and as his language might sometimes suggest, his doctrine draws very near to agnosticism. He is saved from that by his theory of knowledge, and on the basis of this, with the help of a long tradition of Christian thought, he builds his doctrine of analogy. As will be remembered, that theory combined truth with limitation. It is of the nature of the intellect to know the meaning of reality, but in a human being that intellect is correlated with sense, and the appropriate and proportionate object of its thought is sensible being. The result is that, "incorporeal things, of which there are no phantasms, are known by us by relation to sensible bodies, of which there are phantasms."[2] The difficulty is increased when we try to form a concept of God. Far from having an intuition of him we have not even any proper concept. Our sole refuge is analogy, and the highest ideas that we can think of, "signify the divine substance and are predicated of God substantially . . . but fail to represent him." This doctrine was in accord with the tradition of Christian thought which, assisted in its language by Neo-Platonism, approached God by the *via negativa*. St. Thomas, in his *Commentary on the Divine Names*, accepts this and finds an accurate and scientific formula for it. If in the *Summa Theologica* he seems to go beyond the premisses he has himself laid down, the reason is that he is making use of revealed theology. We are left at times in doubt whether the assertions he makes about the nature of God are to be taken as justified by philosophy alone or guaranteed by faith.

The *via media*, then, which he finds between agnosticism

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 30. [2] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 84, a. 7.

and anthropomorphism is that of analogy. We have learnt in the chapter on metaphysics that there is sufficient unity in the conception of being to allow of a proportionality in its different orders. If we can find any attribute or concept which belongs to being, and does not contain in itself any intrinsic limitation, or again if we can from the richness of pure act deduce any other virtue, then we shall be able to predicate that of God with truth analogously though not univocally. This is the way he carries on the suggestions of the pseudo-Dionysius : " In Scripture a twofold way is found of expressing the excellence of what is divine. First, by contrasting with the divine excellence whatever involves privation or defect ; as when, for instance, we say that all the justice of man is unclean as compared with the justice of God ; and so, too, we can say all human reckoning and thought is to be counted a kind of error in comparison with the security and permanence of the divine and perfect knowledge. . . . A second way followed in Holy Scripture is by attributing privative terms to God because he exceeds all measure ; as God who is the purest light is called invisible ; who is above all most praiseworthy and to be invoked is called ineffable ; who is omnipresent is called incomprehensible, as though he were apart from all ; who can be found by all things is called untraceable ; and this owing to the difficulty of finding, because the circumference of his sphere is nowhere but rather the centre of it is everywhere intelligible ; and all these things are said because he exceeds all measure."[1]

This does not mean merely that the divine exceeds the human measure, or that a concept can be predicated literally of God if it is carried to an infinite degree. St. Thomas goes a step further towards agnosticism, and he is bound to do so on his premisses. Since in God essence and existence are identical, his nature is so simple as not to admit

[1] *De Div. Nominibus*, c. 7.

plurality of any kind, not even in perfections. Consequently, when we predicate being and goodness and wisdom and life and intelligence of God, we must admit our further handicap that all these perfections are identical in the divine subject, as he is essentially all that he is. Have we, then, to confess that one is as good as another, that they are all equally equivocal or tautologous? No, says St. Thomas, they are not used with the intention of attributing different qualities to God. They are drawn from experience, from finite being where they signify what is really distinct. As we cannot mean by one concept what we mean by another, and as they all belong to being and in finite being cannot mean the same, we have a right to apply not one but all of them to God. They provide for us a real means, founded on a real distinction in nature and in our thought, to know what is being also, though one and undiffused. It is we who benefit by calling God by different names, and we truly learn more of him. As St. Thomas says: "if nothing else were meant in saying that God is good except that God is the cause of good, it would follow on the same reasoning that all the names of divine effects could be predicated of him, so that it could be said that God is the sky because he made the sky."[1] No, "the reason that the names we attribute to God are not synonymous, although they signify one unique thing, is that they signify this thing by means of multiple and diverse notions."[2]

It remains, then, to show shortly how the nature of God is elicited out of the changeless, absolute being who is first cause. The process is fairly straightforward on condition that the metaphysical principles already established are accepted. Moved to first mover, effect to cause, contingent to absolute and necessary, express the relation of beings composed of potency and act to pure act. In the hierarchy covered by this last relation we saw that the

[1] *De Potent.*, q. 7, a. 6. [2] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 13, a. 4.

lowest revealed most multiplicity, least meaning and least unity. In the movement upward there came form and a more concentrated unity and a greater significance. I mention these three or four attributes, but the same could be said of life, power, and spatial and temporal qualifications. In the metaphysical stage covered by the definition of man, the unity of being is such that it is self-determined and exists for itself and to itself. This form of subsistence is personality. To complete the picture we have only to think of all the perfections of being described, flowing together into the source and meeting in one in that fullness of being which subsists in complete actuality, in the identity of existence and essence. Abstract though the language must necessarily be, it covers intense concentrated life and personality, and any other mode of expression would be less significant and so give us a less high idea of the perfection and transcendence of God.

How, then, are we to safeguard this conception of God, and by what rules are we to be guided in addressing him? The answer is to attribute to God such qualities, and only such qualities, as contain in the concept of them no imperfection, and to attribute them not univocally but according to a law of proportionality. In other words, certain natures and attributes belong to specific kinds of being exclusively; other attributes range up and down and vary in meaning in proportion with the kind of being to which they belong; some of them are essentially limited, others are limited only by the subject which possesses them. Of these only the last can belong to God. God cannot be a bull, nor light, nor soul of the world; he does not speak nor deliberate, he is not slow nor quick, timid nor brave. But if we consider justice and love, knowledge and will, we shall find that they do not debase any subject to which they are attributed. It is the subject which clouds their perfection. Hence, beholding our own being and the goodness which is proportionate to

it, we can assign with truth to God a goodness which will be proportionate to the intensity and height of being which he possesses.[1] St. Thomas follows a definite course in working out these attributes, which may be traced by consulting, for instance, the titles of the chapters in the first book of the *Contra Gentiles*. God is first shown to be neither in space nor time, as idolaters fondly imagine; then come the doctrines of essence and existence and analogy which are followed by the application to God of the three great transcendental notions of unity, goodness and truth. The mode of God's knowledge, how he knows himself and all things else down to individual contingent events, occupies many chapters, and the book concludes with a discussion of the will of God, his freedom and love and life and happiness.

These attributes must be dealt with very shortly. Infinity belongs to God, "inasmuch as there is no limit to his perfection. . . ." Every actuality inhering in another takes limitation from that wherein it is; for what is in another is therein according to the measure of the recipient. An actuality, therefore, that is in none, is bounded by none; thus, if whiteness were self-existent, the perfection of whiteness in it would have no bounds till it attained all the perfection of whiteness that is attainable. But God is an actuality in no way existent in another; he is not a form or nature; since he is his own being, his own existence. Therefore he is infinite."[2] Again he is intelligent, because, as we have seen, intelligence grows with the immanence of act, and God is pure act. St. Thomas approves entirely of the saying of Aristotle that knowledge is a form of life, and the most excellent form. We shall never understand his intellectualism unless we grasp that knowledge is a form of possession, and that, in its highest reaches, the object becomes one with the subject in an immanent act. Love in desire tends

[1] Cf. *Contra Gent.*, I, 30. [2] *Contra Gent.*, I, 43.

to this union ; love consummated belongs to the intellect as it is in its act that two become one without loss to each other. " The intellect," says Aristotle, " thinks itself in seizing the intelligible, for it becomes itself intelligible at this contact, at this thinking. There is, then, identity between the knower and the knowable. For the power of perceiving the knowable—that is, the intellect and the actuality of the intellect—is itself the possession of the knowable; this divine characteristic then finds itself in its highest degree in the divine intellect."

Closely connected with this concentrated diaphanous life of the spirit which St. Thomas attributes supremely to God, are his changelessness and eternity. The latter is defined in the words of Boëthius as the complete, perfect and simultaneous possession of unceasing life. Time is movement numbered according to a before and after ; it is therefore affected with a certain subjectivity and relativity. We think in time according to St. Thomas, because the mode of our thinking is discursive, and because of the connection of our concepts with the temporal object of sense. We and all other changing things necessarily have a calendar. " Eternity is the measure of permanent being, while time is the measure of movement."[1] The picture, as can be seen, owes much to Aristotle, and it suggests his far-withdrawn God wrapt up in himself, heedless of all else. The Arabians realised this, and St. Thomas, too, knew well that Christian orthodoxy recognised no such Godhead. He appears to supplement the account with the Augustinian theory of ideas. God is the exemplary cause of all that is or can be, and creatures are the myriad reflections of the one infinite essence. To press this further would, however, do an injustice to St. Thomas, despite his language at times. That language is a concession to the Neo-Platonism imbedded in Christian literature. He is on the border of mystery, and his own theory of analogy

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 10, a. 4.

justified here a plea of ignorance. That God knows creatures, and individually by name, was to him certain. As first cause he must do so, and again as the fullness of which they have all received, but how he does so must be, in great part at least, his own secret. The suggestion of Averrhoes that God knew other things than himself as universal source was helpful but insufficient. It is in keeping with his regard for Aristotle that St. Thomas will hardly believe that the passage in the *Metaphysics* confines God's knowledge to himself. To say that God is interested only in himself is to confuse the relations between God and creatures, and to introduce a principle of comparison which does not exist. Moreover, to deny God a mode of knowing and to set certain objects of knowledge outside his horizon would involve a limitation in what by definition is without potency. There can, then, be no doubt that God knows all that is and as it is, and for a clue St. Thomas has only to follow his doctrine of the first cause. The first cause is being in its full actuality and all that is depends upon it, not for this quality, or part, or character, but for its reality. We have to hark back, that is, to the notion of being and remember that the divisions of it were just as much being as what was common. In an ordinary genus the species adds to the notion of it, the horse to that of animal, and if we add saddle and bridle we have left animal altogether—but a bridle is equally well a being as a horse. God's causality, therefore, interpenetrates reality as profoundly and as comprehensively as being of itself, and as his causality is known to him so is every creature down to its last particular. Averrhoes, consequently, was wrong in conceding to God a knowledge only as universal source; that is, to think in terms of genus and not of being, and to forget that God's causality is only analogous with any other species. To say that God has an idea or ideas of all creatures may serve as a way of speaking, but strictly it belongs to a lower level of thinking

than that St. Thomas wishes to keep. *Scientia Dei causa rerum*; this saying, which in turn must not be pressed to an extreme, does bring out the truth that God's knowledge does not depend on real particular objects. We have to reverse the relation, and it is because objects depend on God's measuring and active thought, and not *vice versa*, that we can without too much difficulty see how God, in knowing himself, knows everything else not in general but directly.

For St. Thomas, where intellect is there also is will, and so will is rightly predicated of God. "It is," he says, "a property of all being to seek its own perfection and the preservation of its own existence. Every being does this in its own way; intelligent beings by their will; animals by their sensitive appetite; unconscious nature by a certain physical nisus. It makes a difference, however, whether the thing craved for is possessed or not. Where it is not possessed, the nisus of desire proper to each several kind goes out to seek what is wanting; where the thing is possessed, it is rested in and clung to. This characteristic of all being cannot be wanting in the first of beings, which is God. Since, then, God has understanding, he has also a will, whereby he takes complacency in his own being and his own goodness."[1] Will, then, is so to speak another sidelight on God's knowledge of himself. Object and subject are one in his actuality, and as his being is most desirable and enjoyed consciously and completely, God possesses will. We may even say that he possesses free will, though again that freedom is of so transcendent an order that there is only an analogy between it and ours. God is not determined by anything outside himself, and we must not think even of his own nature as lying heavily upon his acts. That nature is wholly active and taken up into his will. Hence he is independent of all else save himself; he has full charge

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 72.

over his own nature, and he does what he does solely because he wills it. The freedom, therefore, which Absolute idealists attribute to man, St. Thomas reserves for God, and as they distinguish freedom from indeterminism, so we may say that in God freedom can go with a love of himself which is necessary, God cannot but love himself; as, however, he is not determined to that by anything outside himself, but instead does so because, to use human language, he wishes it, he has freedom not of deliberation, nor of alternatives, but of self-determination. In his relation with other beings, however, we cannot speak of necessity of any kind. God's action in creating is entirely free, just as it is in his power to have created or to create other worlds. And if this presents a difficulty in that it seems to suggest changeability in God, the answer is that the change lies on that side of the relation where there is change, and not on the other. It is because this world is not necessary that we can say that God's act is not necessitated. *Actio est in passo*; God as agent is unchanged in creating; he abides in his eternity and essence; it is the world which comes to be, is temporal, and of such a nature that it cannot be God nor challenge his essential freedom. But as this touches upon the relation of this universe to God in creation, it is better to reserve treatment of it to the next chapter.

CHAPTER VII

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

THE abstract and metaphysical language in which St. Thomas clothes his serious thought has not, I hope, concealed the fact that the problems he has been discussing are real and ever with us. In modern language, one of them concerns the transcendence and immanence of God. To this St. Thomas gives an answer in terms of potency and act, and with the help of the doctrine of analogy. God is transcendent, and can never form a unity of nature with other beings. Other beings have their own subsistent nature and existence, and yet this being of theirs defines at the same time their complete dependence on God. It is in the reconciliation of these two at first sight incompatible facts, which are both necessary for a satisfactory answer, that the strength and originality of the Thomist solution lie. In this system also it is permissible by reason of analogy to say that "the heavens declare the glory of the Lord," and to speak of him as ineffable. We have now to see that the poetic insight shown in such language as "every common bush aflame with God" has more than its sober equivalent in the doctrine of creation, without the inconvenience of pantheism. "God is said to be in all things by essence; but by his own essence."[1]

The easiest way to approach the subject of the world and its relation to God is by the principle of goodness. Most philosophers have found an irresistible attraction in the notion of the good, and St. Thomas is no exception, intellectualist as he is. When we leave the consideration

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 18, a. 3.

of God's essential being, and think of him in relation to what is not himself, goodness, as St. Thomas allows, is the first and most significant attribute. P. Sertillanges goes so far as to suggest that in the culmination of the Thomist system the notions of first mover and first cause are swallowed up in that of goodness. "At an extremely high point of view . . . God does not really move, nor cause, nor act; it is things which are moved, caused, and set in act *in dependence upon him.* Movement does not issue from him; it comes to him. The relations do not pass from the unconditioned to the conditioned, but from the conditioned to its first Condition; hence the term, participation, preferred by Plato, is kept by St. Thomas, as this word expresses better a relation which is unilateral and of the low to the high. The Demiurge acts, even as the *Nous* of Anaxagoras; but the Good acts not."[1] Now *bonum est diffusivum sui* (good loves to give of itself); it is under this formula that St. Thomas cloaks the mystery of creation, and he is wont to add that that creation must be multiple because the rich simplicity of God cannot be reflected except in a diverse and ordered series of aspects. This last is not to be taken too seriously; it is a hint taken from Neo-Platonism and used as an argument of convenience. The same may be said of the formula just quoted, with reservations. St. Thomas is bound by his own principles to hold that the ultimate reason for creation is the best of reasons, namely, God's own good pleasure. No further question can with reason be asked. Nevertheless, St. Thomas shows great discernment and seems almost to surprise the secret of the divine nature when he argues that it is of the nature of goodness, of perfect love, to give. We must understand by such "giving" a free giving, unless we look to the Christian doctrine of the Trinity as a mysterious but illuminating confirmation of the principle. Finite beings can have no claim on God to

[1] Sertillanges, *op. cit.*, Vol. V, pp. 142–3.

exist; to suggest this would be to reduce God to an equality with them, to introduce necessity where there can be no necessity, and so limit the illimitable. "Whatever creature God wills to exist, that creature stands in no necessary relation to the divine goodness, which is the proper object of the divine will."[1] He sums up his view shortly as follows: "We cannot admit either that the divine will wills none of the effects of its causation, or that its volition is determined by some exterior object. The proper object of the will is good apprehended as such by the understanding. Now the divine understanding apprehends, not only the divine being, or divine goodness, but other good things likewise; and it apprehends them as likenesses of the divine goodness and essence, not as constituent elements of the same. Thus the divine will tends to them as things becoming its goodness, not as things necessary to its goodness."

The created universe, then, is the outcome of the divine goodness, a finite subsistent participation with an order in it based on the degree of resemblance to the divine prototype. It is multiple because it is fitting that the epitome of perfection, God, should be illustrated by a thousand-and-one splendours. Each creature, too, because it is of divine handiwork, is stirred in the depths of its being and drawn by the divine goodness. This nisus it is, or love in a conscious being, which gives order and finality to the universe. Behind the sober and metaphysical account of St. Thomas is hidden the language of the Psalms. The tiny shell of creation is murmurous of its source. "It is evident that even agents devoid of consciousness can work for an end, and strive after good with a natural appetite, and seek the divine likeness and their own perfection." Movement, then, and tendency belong just as closely to the system as static form; in fact, form, when examined, breaks up into a rhythm of movement.

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 82.

Aristotle had already suggested that God "moves as object of desire," and St. Augustine saw all life consummated in the central Goodness. "But Thou, being the Good which needeth no good, art ever at rest because Thy rest is Thou Thyself. And what man can teach man to understand this? . . . Let it be asked of Thee, sought in Thee, knocked for at Thee; so shall it be received, so shall it be found, so shall it be opened" (*Confessions*, Bk. XIII). All things, as he sees them, are drawn to final truth and goodness, as the hart to the spring. Both these conceptions reappear in the vision which St. Thomas gives us of the world constituted and set in motion by that love "which moves the sun and other stars."

The words which St. Thomas uses to express the relation of dependence of the world on God are creation and conservation. No subject is more exposed to difficulties of the imagination, and it must be admitted that the language of St. Thomas, adapted as it is for tyros, lends itself to this confusion. His doctrine is, however, stated quite clearly in many passages. Creation is a production *ex nihilo sui et subjecti*. "We have to think not only of the emanation of some particular being from some other particular being, but also the emanation of the whole of being from a universal cause, which is God, and it is this emanation we call by the name of creation."[1] He elucidates this further by pointing out that the preposition, "from," in the phrase, "from nothing" does not refer to a material cause but to a relation, and again that there is no succession in creation as there is nothing common between being and not-being. Lastly: "creation in its active sense signifies the divine action, which is his essence with a relation to the creature. But the relation of God to the creature is not real, but only mental (*secundum rationem tantum*). The relation of the creature to God is on the other hand real. . . . Creation, in its passive

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 85, a. 1.

sense, is something received in a creature, and is the creature."[1] These distinctions help us to see what St. Thomas means. Our trouble is that we cannot help picturing creation as a kind of beginning, as an event with a background and a history. We have to give a character to nothing and fancy it as something out of which that which is created proceeds. " There was nothing and then something was made " ; this mode of expression, though inevitable and justifiable, suggests a time before creation, a time in which creation took place and a matter already there to be formed. Unless we correct these images we shall never be able either to understand or criticise the theory of St. Thomas. In its active sense from God's side it leaves God unchanged, because it is nothing but God's essence or timeless act considered in relation to an effect. *Actio est in passo* ; the effect makes no change in God ; the result is wholly comprised in the existence of a finite being in whose very definition is contained creatureliness, that is, dependence on the complete being of God. If I learn the system of St. Thomas, all my knowledge rests on that of my teacher ; there is no change necessarily implied in his mind by this fact, and though the illustration is not complete, it serves to suggest that a cause can remain unaffected by its effects. Here, in creation, in its passive sense, we have being totally summed up in a relation of dependence. That is why St. Thomas calls those arguments against creation foolish which are drawn from the nature of movement or change ; " for creation is not a change, but is the mere dependence of created being on the principle by which it is set up, and so comes under the category of relation ; hence the subject of creation may very well be said to be the thing created."[2] We can see also why St. Thomas insists that in creation we are dealing with being itself and not with the relation of this or that determinate being to another. These latter

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 45, a. 3. [2] *Contra Gent.*, II, 18.

affect each other in definite ways which fall under the categories. God alone can create and conserve, and this act of his does not meet or interfere with finite causes and effects.

From this doctrine it follows that time and succession do not enter into the notion of creation. Time belongs to the creature if it is of its nature to have movement; there is no time in creation, nor is there any continuation of it, though there is no point of time in the life of a finite being when it is not the term of the relation which has for its effect, this creature. The gift of being is not like an alms, or the making of a house. It is not a handing over of something, but the maintenance and upkeep of it. At every moment of its existence a creature is equally dependent on God, so that to speak of conservation over and above creation is in one sense a mistake. We use the word conservation to cover the continued life of the creature, not strictly the continuity of the creative act. That is one and never renewed; the changes occur on the side of the effect. Hence we reserve the word creation usually for the primal state of the creature, which is in relation to its future states as antecedent to consequent and cause to effect.

This being the case, the question of the duration of the universe becomes quite secondary. The point St. Thomas wishes to establish is that all finite being must, by its very nature, stand in a certain relation to God, a relation *sui generis*, which he calls creation. Now whether the series of dependents is prolonged indefinitely, or has a definite beginning, makes no difference to its status of dependence. That is his mind on the matter, but unfortunately there were complications which led him into controversy and gave rise to misunderstandings. The Book of Genesis described, and the Christian Revelation taught, creation in time. This doctrine of the faith many of the earliest Christian thinkers had found difficult to reconcile with

the Greek philosophies known to them. By the thirteenth century, however, the common view was that the doctrine of Revelation could be proved by reason, and was in fact the only view compatible with reason. That is to say, they held that creation *ab æterno* was self-contradictory. Now St. Thomas, they saw, was following Aristotle, and Aristotle was in their eyes definitely on the side of the eternity of matter, and they could point in support of their view to the teaching of the Arabian Averrhoes. No wonder, then, that we find this question of the eternity of the world used as a trump card by the opponents of the new Aristotelianism. The very title of St. Thomas' *De Æternitate contra Murmurantes* shows the state of affairs. At first, in his earlier days, St. Thomas, anxious no doubt in his young enthusiasm to find Aristotle a Christian in the making, had sought to whittle down the view of that philosopher. In his *Commentary on the Sentences* he says that Aristotle did not believe that the question could be proved one way or the other. Later on in his life he began to see that this interpretation was impossible, though he still wanted to show that the acceptance of the eternity of the world does not commit Aristotle to the view of Averrhoes. "Prime matter," he says, "like any other existence, must be derived from the first principle of being, even if it be eternal as Aristotle proves in the second book of the *Metaphysics*."[1]

His own position was straightforward and simple. He held that it could not be proved from reason that the world was not *ab æterno*. Creation was compatible with either view; but we knew from Revelation that actually the world was created in time. There is not space to give his arguments showing that the idea of a world *ab æterno* is not self-contradictory. They go to show that the contrary proofs rest on difficulties of the imagination or the supposition that an infinite series is impossible. About

[1] In *VIII Physic.*, Lect. 2.

this latter he seems to have been undecided. In the *Physics* and *De Æternitate*, he is against asserting the impossibility, while in the *Summa* he inclines the other way. Creation is compatible with either view because, as we have already seen, it makes no difference to the essential dependence of finite objects whether they are finite or infinite in number and duration. The one possible objection is that Aristotelian principles do not permit of a creation in time ; prime matter is necessarily eternal and as matter always co-exists with form, therefore the world itself is eternal. St. Thomas answers this by distinguishing between formation and creation. Aristotle, he says, was speaking of the former, and it is true that matter in this sense could not come out of anything else, but there is no evidence in this that it could not have been created ; created, indeed, not by itself, but together with form.

The theory of creation is once more, as can be seen from the foregoing, intimately bound up with his theory of potency and act and the other metaphysical principles. All other beings than God, if they exist, have their own existence limited by their essence, and are, to that extent, independent. But if independent they have also dependence in their very bones, and it is the conjunction of these two characteristics, dependence and independence in one, which defines the philosophical conception of a creature. Thomists with at least some justification claim that if their analysis be true, creation includes all that is best in other philosophies of God without their inconveniences. God is brought nearer than hands and feet, and nevertheless his transcendence is untouched. He gives without loss or gain ; the creature owes all to him, yet remains integral, and in intelligent beings gifted with proprietorship. Again, to create is an act proper to and worthy of God alone. What he makes is more closely united to him than the work of any artist to its maker, and at the same

time it is no dead image fashioned out of a resisting material, but an existent being with a nature or selfhood of its own.

From this notion of creation St. Thomas passes consistently to those of conservation and providence. Conservation we have seen to be nothing more than an extension of creation, an extension which strictly has reference to the effects of God's causality and not to the causative act itself. The world thus created consists according to St. Thomas of an ordered series of natures which reflects in varying degree the divine excellence. Matter introduces an element of contingency into it, while form insures definite meaning and law. By providence he means the scheme or order of all that is, in consonance with which all things follow their appointed course and destiny He is not afraid of admitting evil within this order. Evil, he says, is not created by God; it finds its way in owing to the imperfection of certain types of being. The good which animals pursue cannot be gained without accompanying pain; man cannot, in his present life, be virtuous without effort and painful endurance. God never wills moral evil since it consists precisely in the refusal to follow what is God's law and one's own best good. God knows evil and co-operates with the act in so far as it is positive and good. This world is not the best conceivable; God could have created more perfect beings, but their ideal would not be our Utopia; it would be completely different. This universe, then, of ours, if not the best conceivable, is relatively best, relatively to us and to the end and perfection which God had in view.

A problem here awaits St. Thomas, one which lies in wait for all religious philosophers. God knows all that is, conserves it, and in his providence directs this world to its proper end. The explanation given of creation and of the relation of the first cause to creatures helps to show that

the causality of God can coincide with that of finite beings without fusion or interference. Where there is freedom the relation is necessarily more obscure, especially if we take as an example a free act which will be performed to-morrow, or could have been performed, but actually will never be carried out. The problem is, as all can see, closely connected with that of predestination. The subject always drew, and still draws, the attention of Christian thinkers, and not least St. Thomas, but it did not become a *cause célèbre* until the end of the sixteenth century. Then two strongly opposed solutions were given, and both were usually supported by quotations out of the writings of St. Thomas. It is quite impossible to summarise in a short space the views of either party so as to give satisfaction to them. The subject, as always happens in a long dispute between keen-minded thinkers, is criss-crossed with innumerable distinctions. I propose, therefore, to give only some of the general principles of St. Thomas chiefly by means of quotations.

All events, contingent as well as necessary, free and determined, past and future, actual and possible, are known by God. Were this not so his knowledge would be limited, and his providence would be thwarted by such ignorance. God, says St. Thomas, sees all events in his eternity; "for his eternity touches with its presence the whole suite of time and transcends it; so that we may regard God as knowing the passage of time in his eternity, as one seated on a high rock sees with one glance the wayfarers passing by."[1] The image is not very satisfactory but the meaning is clear and rests on the notion of pure act. It does not explain, however, how God can know the acts of a free man, which would have happened under certain circumstances, but actually will never happen. St. Thomas, like every other Christian writer, holds that God must know such contingencies, as

[1] *Compend. Theol.*, c. 39.

otherwise he could not deliver us from the evil which would infallibly follow from our entering upon a certain course of action. Moral certainty again seems insufficient. The two answers which have been favoured by scholastic philosophers are summed up in the names of Physical Predetermination and *Scientia Media*. The majority of Thomists follow the first, and claim that it alone is in accord with the specific teaching of St. Thomas. Some who hold the second also trace it to St. Thomas, while others think that his opinion is doubtful, and maintain in any case that the theory of Physical Predetermination is unacceptable.

In general, and as prolegomena to an answer, it may be said that the relation of pure act and finite being is quite different from that of any finite being with another. According to the theory of analogy the word cause is not used univocally of God and creatures. Again, God does not enter into the definition of a creature, though that does not prevent it from being wholly dependent on God; still less, of course, were that possible, does a creature enter into the definition of God. They are not in the same order, so that the action of one does not conflict with the action of the other. There are no barriers to divine causality—for that divine causality is conterminous with all that is, after the fashion of divinity and not in the restricted and chequered manner of the finite. Certain ways, therefore, of stating the problem are false and anthropomorphic; they suppose two finite powers, two realities which may clash. In truth, God's causality no more clashes with freedom than finite with infinite existence, creation with creator. Our words, "possible" and "necessary," do not, as we mean them, apply to God's action; they fall within being—and God is "over and beyond" being. "We must understand that the divine will of which we speak is outside being, and that this latter is penetrated by it in its entirety, even down to all its

divisions. But the possible and the necessary are divisions of being and they have their origin in the divine will."[1] "The necessary and the possible are distinctions belonging to being; hence it follows that it belongs to God, whose power it is which is the cause of being, to bestow necessity or possibility on what he makes according to his providence."[2] This point of view is put still more clearly in one of the most attractive of the saint's works, the *Compendium Theologiæ*.

"Whence it is clear that it is not against the freedom of the will, if God moves the will of man; just as it is not against nature that God acts in natural things; but all inclination, whether natural or free, is from God, both having effect according to the nature of the thing it belongs to; for so God moves things in accordance with their nature."[3] "We must not think that the being of things is caused by God after the manner in which a house is caused by the builder—at whose departure the house still continues to exist, for the builder is not the cause of the house except in so far as he contributes (*movet*) to the being of the house—which contribution is the making of the house (of its coming to be), and that action of his ceases when he goes away. But God is of himself directly the cause of being itself, as it were communicating being to all things, as the sun communicates light to the air and to all else that is lit up by it. And just as the constant illumination of the sun is needed for the continuance of light in the air, so for the continuance of things in being, God must constantly give being to things; and so all things, not only in so far as they come to be, but also so long as they continue to be, are compared to God as the made to the maker. But these latter two must be always together, as must moved and mover. God, then, must always be present in all things, in so far as they have

[1] In *I Peri Hermaneias*, Lect. XIV.
[2] In *VI Metaph.*, Lect. 3. [3] C. 129.

being. But being is what belongs most intimately of all to everything. Therefore God must be in all things."[1]

These quotations give the direction along which St. Thomas works out the problem of divine causality and human freedom; they also serve to fill in the picture outlined in the chapter on metaphysics. So close is the connection of God and ourselves that the very word "and" exaggerates it, and yet there is nothing in common. Each as an existent being has its own personal rights and possessions, but just because the personal life of one is so rich and inalienable it is seen to envelop the other and provide it with liberty and substance.

[1] *Comp. Theol.*, c. 130.

CHAPTER VIII

NATURE AND MAN

§ 1. THE PHYSICAL UNIVERSE

We can pass over rapidly the views which St. Thomas held about the nature of the physical universe. The progress of physical science has put out of date that portion in all past philosophies which relied on contemporary hypotheses. Besides, St. Thomas has not here even the virtue of originality and compares unfavourably with his master, Albert the Great. Neither the system of studies nor the habit of thought gave an impulse to what we now call scientific study. The materials for teaching came from the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, and of the seven subjects studied in these courses that of Dialectic had by far the greatest prominence. When Aristotle came to be the accepted textbook of the schools, his *Physics* and *De Anima* were used as the source for scientific generalisation, and science and philosophy were connected together under what was known as the three modes of abstraction. This theory of the three modes held sway up till the time of Descartes, and is regarded by some modern Thomists as so important as to mark a radical distinction between the ancient and modern empirical philosophies, and to constitute a criticism of the latter. The first mode of abstraction is reached when we omit to consider what is particular in our experience. Our sensations are for ever varying and are of no interest to the scientist. What is left is the common sensibly-known world, and this is the subject matter of Physics. We can now go a step further and not

only neglect individual characteristics, but all that is particular to various kinds of sensible things. We neglect, that is, all sensible properties and consider only what gives them this foundation, namely, quantity. Here is the subject matter of mathematics. Lastly, we can so abstract that we consider the being of a thing apart from all matter. This is metaphysics. It should be noticed that in the second mode of abstraction the subject matter, quantity, cannot exist except in the corporeal and sensible world, but it can be conceived as existing apart, while in the third mode being can both exist apart and be conceived apart. The first mode for St. Thomas was more or less confined to the deductions of metaphysics in relation to the sensible world; hence physics is placed higher than mathematics. The great discovery of the period succeeding the Scholastic was that the second mode could be applied to the first, and this has led to the exploitation of the mathematical physical method, and the series of successes attendant on its use. Here is the advantage over the medieval method, which preferred the deductive to the inductive method, and so limited the scope of physics. The disadvantage, however, has been a confusion between philosophy and science and the prevalence of a bastard mode of knowledge, using the sensible world of being as its object and treating it mathematically. St. Thomas would admit the excellence of this method, the while he would deny the claims made for it by the scientific philosopher. The second mode of abstraction cannot usurp the place of the third, and in so far as it tries to do so it is merely preparing for itself a final disappointment.

The physical universe as St. Thomas saw it is the one made familiar to us by Aristotle and the Ptolemaic astronomy of the concentric spheres and epicycles. Round the centre of the earth move the celestial bodies in a uniform circular motion. These bodies are more perfect than the earth inhabited by man. They are immutable and death-

less; the union in them of form and matter is not subject to decay or growth; their motion is of the most perfect kind, namely circular, and each has its own specific kind of motion and its own natural place. Movement, as we see, occupies a central position in the theory, and one can see the influence in many of the details of the argument of St. Thomas, in his insistence and in the pride of place given to the argument from motion in his series of proofs of God. All the evidence, however, goes to show that his metaphysics is independent of any physical theory, and that he was quite prepared to jettison the current science if a better could be devised. There is no ground, on the other hand, for supposing that he was ahead of his time and entertained doubts about the current astronomy. He could not, indeed, accept the pagan philosopher's belief that the stars had souls, but recourse to the angels provided a pleasing alternative. They, though in no way identified with the stars, were unitary and set them in motion.

The earth has a close connection with the celestial bodies. Unlike them it is subject to birth and decay; hence its movements are of an inferior kind. They are not circular but in a straight line, and they are dependent on the perfect motion of the heavens. The reason for this is, as St. Thomas says, that "all multitude proceeds from unity"; the heavenly bodies are, in their relative immobility, the cause of what is in motion; "therefore the motions of these lower bodies, which are various and manifold, are related to the motion of the heavenly bodies as to their cause."[1] For this reason he is ready to attribute what happens on earth to the influence of the sun and moon and stars. The stars, for instance, have an effect upon our character and are responsible even for the differentiation of sex in the animal forms. The earth itself is made up of the four elements—fire, earth, air and

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 115, a. 3.

water—with a quintessence which, for St. Thomas, belongs only to the celestial bodies. Each of these elements has within it an active and a passive quality: cold and dry, for instance, making up earth, and warm and dry, fire. By reason of these opposites the elements can change and pass into each other. Thus chemical combinations can be formed and in successive gradations the whole variety of the physical universe can be explained.

All that need be remembered in this rudimentary physics and astronomy is the insistence on the principle of movement and change. When St. Thomas turns to a more philosophical explanation he relies on the fact of change and movement and employs the Aristotelian theory of matter and form, or hylomorphism, about which something has already been said. Hylomorphism is a philosophical theory and can survive the effete physical theories by which St. Thomas illustrated its workings. Not that it is independent of experience. St. Thomas, following Aristotle, accepted four different kinds of change which are distinct and valid in experience. They are local motion, qualitative change, growth and decay, and finally substantial change. It is from the latter that the necessity of hylomorphism can best be demonstrated. In substantial change the change is of such a sort that the subject becomes something new, and nevertheless is not completely destroyed. For example, non-living food is transformed into the substance of a living being and becomes part of his flesh and blood. There is nothing now but living matter, and yet the food has not been annihilated; the physical and chemical properties of it persist in some way and can be recovered. If, then, the change be real, the condition of the change must also be real, and the conditions of this change are that something should remain common and that there should have been something real in the food which permitted it to be so changed. The food is determined to a certain and specific kind of being, but besides this specific

form it must possess something in it which enables it to possess the form also of living matter ; otherwise it could never be changed into living matter. St. Thomas concludes, therefore, that there must be two principles present for change to be possible, and these he calls act and potency, or in the material world form and matter. He confirms this argument with another which we have already seen, drawn from the nature of the continuum.

The world, then, is made up of bodies composed of matter and form. The presence of matter is shown by passivity, divisibility, a readiness to suffer change ; form, on the other hand, is responsible for the distinctness and determinateness and activities of bodies. That there are many substances in nature is taken for granted by St. Thomas. His attitude is that of the plain man, and the science of the time was not of the sort to make him circumspect. The one serious critic of the philosophers, Roger Bacon, was vociferous but rather incoherent. The result is that the application of the philosophic principles to the world of change is at times obscure and often grotesque. What is sure in the system is that there is a prime matter (never to be thought of as existing by itself), a co-principle with form, made evident in substantial change, and secondary matter made evident by accidental change. We have to suppose, furthermore, a universe of infinite gradations. Order rules there despite the contingency introduced by matter. Each and every being desires its own perfection and has, therefore, an end ; the form sustains it in being, upholds its own good, and is communicative of its own good. One form cannot, however, change indiscriminately into another. The interaction of bodies is governed by law. When two bodies are attracted to each other, they must have some resemblance, their reciprocal determination has for result something new, which comes about through the exploitation of what is good in both. In this mutual communication of good the form of each suffers because

of the imperfection of it. As we shall see, this accompanying loss is by no means inherent in all forms of interaction. The lowest grade of beings possess only a transient action ; they give to their own loss. Were they more unified, more completely dominated by form, action would add to their perfection. As it is, St. Thomas explains transformation by the help of another third principle, in addition to those of form and matter, namely, privation. In the *De Spiritualibus Creaturis* : " prime matter is said to be generally understood as a certain kind of potency in the line of substance ; it is beyond every species and form, and even privation, though it is capable of receiving forms and privations." Since, then, it is a potency to many forms, indeed to every material form, when it receives any particular form the abundance of its thirst is not satisfied, and it can strictly be said to be unassuaged, to suffer privation. Instead, therefore, of following the Augustinian tradition, upheld by St. Bonaventure and other great Schoolmen, which taught that God implanted in matter at the beginning certain *rationes seminales* (seminal principles), which account for the development and variety of the physical universe, St. Thomas falls back on the simpler explanation that there is a capacity which is brought to act in innumerable forms and never exhausted by any one determinate form. Which of these two theories is nearest to, or perhaps we should say, farthest off from the modern hypothesis of evolution, is a debatable question. It would be a mistake, however, to smile at the theory of St. Thomas as childish and anthropomorphic. In his customary way he is doing nothing more than applying his metaphysical principles. Now, as we have learnt already, it is essential not to think of matter and form as two definite kinds of existent reality apart from each other. Natural objects are made up of both and whatever scientific hypothesis of nature be accepted, evolutionary or static, the principles of St. Thomas find a ready application. They serve to

explain the presuppositions of fixity and change, and disclose the two factors which must be assumed and included in every intelligible account.

§ 2. LIFE

The physical philosophy of St. Thomas need be taken, then, as only a framework into which a variety of scientific theories can be fitted. It is primarily metaphysical, and there reappear under various aspects being, and the distinctions within being, the properties of being, unity and goodness, and the four causes. When he approaches the living and the nature of man, the same method is employed, only the application of his principles becomes still clearer. They are seen, for instance, excellently in the increasing perfection of form and immanence in the living as compared with the inanimate, and the human with the animal. "We must observe that the nobler a form is, the more it rules over corporeal matter, the less it is merged in matter, and the more it excels matter by its power and its operation; hence we find that the form of a mixed body has another operation not caused by its elemental qualities. And the higher we advance in the nobilty of forms, the more we find that the power of the form excels the elementary matter; as the vegetable soul excels the form of the metal, and the sensitive soul excels the vegetable soul."[1] The principle here enunciated is illustrated by examples, sometimes obvious, sometimes very naïve. Mixed substances are superior to simple bodies, because the latter manifest no virtues beyond those of the active and passive qualities which compose them, whereas the former may have a power of attraction like to that of the moon which draws the tides. The modern advocates of Emergent Evolution can, however, supply better examples!

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 76, a. 1.

The degrees of perfection in form are much more convincingly shown by appealing to immanence and formal unity. As has been said, in the simpler bodies the action is transitive ; it is consumed in the object and the agent suffers as a result. Once we reach the level of life the nature of action is very different. The unity of form is such that the whole body of a living thing is enlisted in its behalf, and the end of action is definitely to increase the perfection of the agent. St. Thomas puts this in an impressive way in the *Contra Gentiles* : " The emanations of beings vary with their essences ; the more elevated a nature is, the more intimate is its emanation. In the universe inanimate bodies occupy the lowest place, and their emanation can only be thought of as the action of one individual on another ; when fire produces fire, what happens is that a foreign body is changed and modified by it and transformed into fire. Next to inanimate bodies come plants. In these, it is from within that emanation now proceeds, inasmuch as the sap (humour), intrinsic to the plant, is converted into seed, and this seed being consigned to the earth, develops into a plant. Here, then, already, we have the first grade of life ; for things that move their own selves to action are alive, whereas those that merely move exterior things are wholly devoid of life. . . . The life of plants, however, is imperfect, because notwithstanding the fact that in them emanation proceeds from within, still that which emanates emerges gradually from within and is found ultimately to be quite extrinsic. For the sap of a tree, as it issues from it, becomes first a flower and at length a fruit distinct from the tree's bark, yet fastened thereto. When, however, the fruit is fully developed, the sap in question is completely separated from the tree, and falling to the earth it produces by virtue of the seed another plant. Careful investigation also shows that the first principle of this emanation is derived from without ; for the intrinsic sap of the tree is derived through the roots

from the earth. . . . Now beyond the life of plants we find a higher grade of life, that of the sensitive soul. The emanation proper to this begins, it is true, from outside, but its termination is within, and each stage in its development brings it even further within ; for the sensible object without impresses its form on the external senses, and from these the form passes on to the imagination, and then still further to the memory's store-chamber. Yet in any process whatever of this emanation, the beginning and end belong to different subjects ; for there is no sensitive capacity which reflects upon itself. This grade of life, then, is higher than the life of plants in proportion as the activity of the life is more intimate and self-contained. Still it is not an altogether perfect life, seeing that the emanation always passes from one subject to another. The highest, the perfect grade of life, therefore, is that of the intellect, for the intellect reflects upon itself and is able to understand itself."

In this passage we see how immanence—interior self-possession without dissipation or distraction—defines the degree of vitality or form or act, and marks off the living from the non-living, and the rational from the sensitive. We are in a better position now to understand why St. Thomas lays such stress on form, and why he is in most of his writings such a resolute opponent of the plurality of forms in any one being. Many of his contemporaries were opposed to him on this point. When a being was endowed with the powers and qualities of other natures, they maintained that those other natures continued or lived on within this being, subject to it, but not subsumed within it. The question, therefore, in short, was whether in the example of the human body we are to admit that the physical and chemical properties, and all that can be ascertained or recovered as specific in it, subsist there as what they seem to be, or have they lost their identity in a new unity, the whole of which is determined to be what it is solely by its form ? St. Thomas in most places em-

phatically maintains the second alternative. Not only does he hold "that it is impossible to admit several substantial *esses* in one thing; there can only be the form in this thing which is the source of its *esse*," but he denies that this substantial form can become the matter of another superior form without losing its own. In one place, indeed, in the *De Natura Materiæ*, he appears to hesitate and say that transmutation need not involve the complete disappearance of one form in the other, but the work is not certainly authentic, and the statement is so exceptional as to be a sore puzzle to commentators. His general argument is that the substantial form is the principle of unity which makes the thing to be such and such. Therefore, all that is in the thing must belong to the form; any other alternative would necessarily destroy the unity and involve two substances accidentally united. "If man possessed life, thanks to another form, namely, the vegetable soul, and animal life, thanks to a sensitive soul, and human life, thanks to a rational soul, it would follow that man would not be simply one."[1] "Whence we must conclude that there is no other substantial form in man besides the intellectual soul; and that the soul, as it virtually contains the sensitive and nutritive souls, so does it virtually contain all inferior forms, and itself alone does whatever the imperfect forms do in other things."[2] "As a surface which is of a pentagonal shape is not tetragonal by one shape and pentagonal by another—since a tetragonal shape would be superfluous as contained in the pentagonal—so neither is Socrates a man by one soul, and an animal by another; but by one and the same soul he is both animal and man."[3] In other words, the skin of an animal grafted on to a human body becomes part of the human body and lives with its life; if this were not so it would be like a wooden leg, distinct from the human body and only accidentally united to it.

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 76, a. 3. [2] *Ibid.*, a. 4. [3] *Ibid.*, a. 3.

In the above quotations the word soul is used in the Aristotelian sense, as the act of a physical body which has life potentially, or more simply—though St. Thomas calls this definition only a description, figuraliter, quasi extrinsece et superficialiter et incomplete—the act of a physical, organic body. We are here far from any idea of an alien or new substance coming to inhabit a body already formed. Soul is only a special word used to describe form in a being which has reached a certain degree of organisation and determination of its matter. The body cannot be thought of save in terms of a certain unity; that unity is the soul. The soul follows on a certain degree of organisation, as flame from heat, and with the exception of the intellectual soul does not come from without. "It is the same thing for the body to have a soul, as for the matter of this body to be in act."[1]

This last degree of perfection in the form is reached when its action becomes truly immanent and it is able to attend to itself and move itself. To be self-moving is to be alive. Once this condition is reached a whole new programme of movements is set on foot. No longer is transitive action with mechanical laws sufficient; no longer does the universe play upon the material body and mould it to its will. A reverse process has started, and the self-moving body turns to its own use what is external to it according to the power and perfection of its own immanence. The plant desires its own good like the mineral, but unlike the mineral it can by its own unified operation develop itself and perpetuate itself. "Though the operations which belong to the vegetable soul are directed to the same end as the actions in inanimate things, namely, the attainment and preservation of their being, nevertheless this happens in a higher and nobler way in living things. For inanimate bodies are begotten and sustained in being by extrinsic influence; whereas living things are begotten by an

[1] Id. Id. De Anima, Lect. 1.

intrinsic principle, which is in the seed, and are sustained in being by an intrinsic nutritive principle."

Though the vegetative form is sufficiently noble to deserve the name of living, it represents, notwithstanding, the lowest degree of immanence. It is passive and bears all the signs of its immersion in matter, as it is unconscious, easily lost, and divisible into many lives. The form, therefore, which is not only self-moving but sufficiently self-possessed to be aware of and to direct its own growth, is on a higher level, and this is the animal. The animal is conscious, and with consciousness enjoys a far larger field for operation than the plant. Its unity is richer and at the same time more concentrated, and so, proportionately, its activities are greater and the extent of its influence over the universe wider. The mode of consciousness, however, in an animal is defined and limited by the senses ; the soul is consequently nothing more than the act and unity of the highly elaborated organism ; it is material and mortal. St. Thomas, like Aristotle, divides the animal species into two divisions, the one endowed with the power of locomotion, the other stationary. The first of these is higher than the second, and can serve as the type of the animal form. In explaining its nature St. Thomas follows closely the Aristotelian account, so that there is no need to dwell at length upon it. There is a description of the various external and internal senses. The external are divided into two classes, according as the sensible objects are sensed directly or accidentally. We perceive, for instance, directly the redness of the rose, and only indirectly the rose itself ; where the object can be perceived by more than one sense it is called a *sensibile commune*. The internal senses are four in number, *sensus communis*, the *vis æstimativa*, imagination and memory.

The process of sensation is described by St. Thomas with great care. The sensitive form has reached such a pitch of immanence that it is active and adaptive in contact

with the world. It is freed from passivity to this extent that though external objects play upon it they do so in terms of the sensitive form. Sensation, therefore, is defined as that passive faculty whose nature it is to be modified by the action of an external agent. In the lowest, that is the most material of the senses, touch, the organ is qualified by the sensible object which acts upon it ; in the highest, sight, the eye is affected through the intermediary of the air, but according to St. Thomas, there is no change in the organ ; evidence, indeed, if any were needed, that sight is the most spiritual of the senses ! The process of sensation, however, is not completed by this action of what is external on the organ ; it is only beginning, for the sensitive form has to live or become what is external in its own terms and as a perfection of itself. For sight this mode of sensation is expressed in the oft-repeated formula which epitomises the Thomistic theory of knowledge : *Sensibile in actu est sensus in actu, et intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu.* The sensitive object affects the sense by its quality so as to impress itself upon it like the form of the seal impressed on the wax. If we were to suppose the wax conscious, then in consciously taking on the form of the seal it would know the shape of the seal by becoming it in terms of itself. This image, though employed by St. Thomas, is inadequate, as the process is on a higher level than that of the material analogy, but it serves to bring out the two sides in sensation, the part played by the external object and the immanent activity implied in sensation, in other words, its combined passivity and activity. The word species is used to express this inner conformation ; it is more than a reproduction or image, just as the phrase " impression made by the external object " is not to be taken in too crude a sense. It is enough for St. Thomas that our sensitive experience must have been caused and that *omne agens agit sibi simile.* This fact and this law hold true of all sensation ; hence a species

is always necessary, but obviously not a species which can be identified with a kind of image or photograph.[1]

The knowledge given by sense is more direct than that given by the intellect of man, but in all other respects it is utterly inferior. As St. Thomas says, "The sense does not apprehend the essences of things, but only external accidents; neither does the imagination, for it is concerned only with the images of bodies; it is the intellect alone which apprehends the essence of things."[2] The internal senses help, indeed, to bring consistency and unity into the life of the animal. The *sensus communis* is "the centre from which each single sense springs; to it return the impressions gathered from them, and there their synthesis takes place."[3] But this intercommunication of one sense with another is not sufficient; it must be reinforced by the imagination and memory which associate and keep stored the results of sense experience. Still another power is added, the *ratio* or *vis cogitativa*, which is a kind of animal sagacity or instinct, a power, that is, below reason proper enabling animals to seek their own good in the concrete.

For the rest, St. Thomas is quite ready to endow the animal with all the powers and emotions which we find in ourselves, with the one exception of reason. These powers

[1] According to St. Thomas the function of sense is to give us the sensible external world as it is. There can be, I think, little doubt that he believed in the objectivity of extension, colour and sound. These are the qualities which start the process of sensation, and the end of the process is to give us the qualities as they are in themselves. They are apprehended through the species directly. From his commentaries, however, on the *De Anima* and *De Somniis* it is quite clear that he recognised the possibility of deception, of sensation without any corresponding external quality; and his theory offers an easy explanation. The internal configuration follows on an excitation of the organ of a certain definite kind. If other causes than that of the proper sensible quality produce the same effect upon the organ, then a sensation, say, of blue will follow. This is the manner in which he explains illusions without misgivings as to their normal functioning. The facts that we can correct errors and illusions and allow for "personal equations" and that all modifications fall on the object side of perception confirm his belief.

[2] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 57, a. 1. [3] *De Potentiis Animæ*, c. 4.

are, of course, lifted to a higher level by being informed by a rational soul, and so all in one sense is changed. In the animal, life is limited to a pragmatic and selfish end. There are instincts, such as the maternal, which can be called altruistic, and many of the actions of animals are directed to the welfare of the species. But the maternal instinct performs its function and then dies, because there is no mind present and therefore no power to think of good for its own sake. Every being seeks its own good, and the animal estimates all by pleasure and utility. There are as yet no absolute values, and St. Thomas shows himself sufficiently modern to regard sex as probably the chief driving power in lives which are passed without the sublimating influence of reason.

§ 3. PSYCHOLOGY

Man is differentiated from animals by the gift of reason. He is a rational animal, and if we consult one side of him he seems to be nothing more than a superior animal. St. Thomas probably tends to exaggerate the influence of heredity, of temperament and bodily dispositions on human character and conduct, and he is enabled to do this without fear because of his theory of the relation of the soul to the body. The two are conjoined so as to make one being, the human being, as form with matter. This mode of relationship, which stands in strong opposition to that of the soul inhabiting a body already formed and taking charge of it, determines the whole treatment of human nature. It aroused strong opposition at the time, and without a doubt a consistent application of the theory leads to some surprising results.

Despite the criticism sometimes made, it is certain that St. Thomas in calling the soul the form of the body, does not intend to belittle it. Up to now we have been moving within the realm of matter; even the sensitive soul with

all its powers was bounded by space and time and material organs. But now, with the coming of the rational soul, a completely new world is opened; mind has no physical organ, however much it may be conditioned by the brain and senses; it is infinite in its capacity and so extends beyond the visible and temporal world; its act is so immanent that it can reflect upon itself, be aware of its own nature through its activities, and know also the intelligible nature of the entire universe. Its good, therefore, is not judged by personal pleasure or utility but by absolute goodness and truth. As St. Thomas says: "But in those things which have knowledge, each one is determined to its own natural being by its natural form, in such a manner that it is nevertheless receptive of the species of other things; for example, sense receives the species of all things sensible, and the intellect of all things intelligible, so that the soul of man is, in a way, all things by sense and intellect; and thereby, those things that have knowledge, in a way, approach to a likeness to God, in whom all things pre-exist, as Dionysius says."[1] Again, to bring out the change that has taken place, he is fond of comparing the reason of man with *materia prima*. Just as in the region of the physical world prime matter is nothing more than a reaching out to form, a capacity to be filled, so in the spiritual world the mind of man begins in darkness as a power receptive of the universe of truth. A physical substance is perfected and at the same time limited by its form; it is itself and nothing else; it suffers therefore from individualism and its good is selfish. But a being with a mind can enter the whole world and make it its life; it is *quodammodo omnia*. It can know other things as they are in themselves, not as they appear to it or merely in so far as they minister to its private well-being. It does not indeed absorb the actual existent things which live their life independently; it knows them

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 80, a. 1.

after the fashion of a mind, not possessed of intuition, to wit, through ideas or "intentional" forms; that is to say it possesses them immanently, both as a perfection of itself and as they are in themselves.

Because man is endowed with this new power St. Thomas calls him a denizen of two worlds, a horizon or meeting-place. He is not, like the angels, pure spirit; he is not, like the animals, purely material. He is both in one with all the advantages and disadvantages of such a lot. Whereas some of his contemporaries were inclined to regard the body as a necessary evil, and to advocate the Platonic flight from it as an ideal, St. Thomas shows himself a true humanist in his defence of it. As one of the most discerning of modern writers on Thomism has remarked, it cannot be said of him as it was said of Plotinus, that he hated to be a man.[1] He is neither a misanthropist nor a Stoic, and if his adversaries charged him with underestimating the soul, he could retort that they failed to appreciate the whole of human nature. The Augustinians elevated the soul into a complete and independent substance, itself composed of matter and form, and on this account they were—so St. Thomas thought—prevented from doing justice to the substantial union of the body with the soul. It is not our body which feels, nor our mind which thinks, but we, as single human beings, who feel and think. The theory of substantial union by matter and form was then of great moment to him, and explains why he is unwontedly vigorous in his defence of it against the Augustinians, and

[1] P. Rousselot, *L'Esprit de St. Thomas. Etudes*, Vol. 128, 1911, pp. 627-34. P. Rousselot gives as an illustration of the humanism of St. Thomas his remark that "man is bound by a kind of natural debt to live with others merrily, *ut aliis delectabiliter convivat*," and refers also to his view that even in the state of innocence there would have been generation. "I answer that in the state of innocence there would have been generation in order to multiply the human race; otherwise the sin of man would have been very necessary, seeing that so much good has followed." And on the manner of generation he writes: "Not because there would have been less sensible pleasure as some say; for the purer the nature, the greater would have been the sensible pleasure."

particularly the Averrhoists, led by Siger de Brabant. The latter committed the additional grave crime of quoting Aristotle as a witness on their side. What precisely the Averrhoists held, and which of the two interpretations of the famous text of Aristotle in the *De Anima*, theirs or that of St. Thomas, be right, it is not easy to say. St. Thomas accuses them of a doctrine which is incompatible with Christianity, a single separate intellect, which is that of the species, humanity, thinking in a succession of individuals. He rejects this both as an incorrect interpretation of Aristotle and as an absurd theory. " It is impossible," he says, " for many distinct individuals to have one form, as it is impossible for them to have one existence, for the form is the principle of existence." Again, if there were one intellect for all men then " the distinction between Socrates and Plato would be no other than that of one man with a tunic and another with a cloak, which is absurd " ; and lastly, " the diversity of phantasms which are in this one and that one would not cause a diversity of intellectual operations in this man and that man."

The substantial union of matter and form is then, in his eyes, the only possible explanation, and it is interesting to see that he argues to this view in logical continuation from what he has said of physical and living substances. The soul is, by definition, the substantial form of a physical living organism. " It is clear that the first thing by which the body lives is the soul. And as life appears through various operations in different degrees of living things, that whereby we primarily perform each of all these vital actions is the soul. For the soul is the primary principle of our nourishment, feeling, and local movement ; and likewise the primary principle whereby we understand. Therefore this principle by which we primarily understand, whether it be called the intellect or the intellectual soul, is the form of the body." [1] From this it is clear that St. Thomas does not

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 26, a. 4.

start with the notion of the human soul as a kind of mysterious entity which has got to be fitted somehow into a body. He begins by regarding it as the form of the body, the determining and active principle of the body. Are we, then, to think of it as nothing more than a principle of organisation and unity? No, he answers, because on inspection we find that this does not altogether meet the case. There is no reason why a soul should be not only the determining principle of a body but also have an operation independent of that body. "Aristotle does not say that the soul is the act of a body only, but the act of a physical organic body which has life potentially; and that this potentiality does not reject the soul." Form can reach such a degree of immanence that it is self-conscious, and with this self-consciousness the soul can become and be itself by becoming all things immaterially; and we may add that the fact that "man can know all things and apprehend the immaterial and universal" is for St. Thomas a decisive proof in itself that the intellect is not a bodily activity.

There is nothing, therefore, against the possibility of a form having a side to it which is immaterial, and in the human soul facts show that this is the case. The intellectual operation proves, he says, that the soul must be both incorporeal and subsistent. By our intellect we can know all corporeal things; now, if knowledge were in any way corporeal this would not happen, because the particular kind of body it would have to be would prevent it from knowing all else indifferently, as a sick man's tongue being vitiated by a feverish and bitter humour is insensible to anything sweet, and everything seems bitter to it. Again, if the intellect had a particular bodily organ, then it could not know all objects as they are in themselves, but only relatively to the particular and determinate nature of that organ. Now the intellect testifies to us in its very act that it knows reality not pragmatically but truly, that is, as it

is in itself. Furthermore, it knows objects precisely by abstracting from them all that renders them material, removing them out of space and time, and considering them according to their form, absolutely and universally. Lastly, the immanent activity of the subject revealing itself in self-consciousness, in the power to reflect upon itself and realise itself in the identity of a lived and living idea or form, cannot without contradiction be attributed to any purely material or corporeal form.

If, therefore, there is an activity without a bodily organ and independent of the body, it must have as its subject what is also independent or subsistent. "Only a self-subsisting thing can have an operation of its own; for nothing can operate but what is actual." Looking at human life St. Thomas, like Crusoe, has found the footprint of mind, and the paradox of mind is that the universality of its outlook corresponds with a greater inner concentration or selfhood.[1] In the lowest orders of reality unity is only just discernible, and the function of form as determinant is almost wholly external; two pins are very much alike; the form is easily destroyed and is multiple and monotonous. In living things the form grows in power, the unity is richer, less passive and less isolated. The sensitive being has more autonomy than the vegetative, but the form is still occupied and absorbed in its own private affairs. In the rational soul freedom and universality for the first time emerge, and a new order begins, the monad life. The whole world can be reflected and enjoyed in consciousness, and in that consciousness the form is face to face not only with the universe but with itself. In man this blaze of consciousness is subdued and darkened by the co-partnership of the body. St. Thomas calls him a creature of two worlds; the connatural object of his mind is the sensible thing, or rather material form, known by the aid of the senses; he is still passive to experience; he has to grow to self-knowledge

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 68.

and perfection, and learn laboriously the natures of external things, remedying the lack of intuition by discursive reasoning, deductive and inductive, and filling out the intelligible world of essences he dimly apprehends with the help of quantitative methods suited to his senses. He is hung, therefore, in St. Thomas' vision, halfway between the world of body and the world of spirit, and if on one side he is kin to the animals and the earth, he is also neighbour to the angels, those pure forms, lighted from within and each comprising a complete and specific world of beauty and image of the divine.

Such then is his analysis of the rational soul and of human nature. To sum up, man is one being, composed of matter and form ; there can be only one form in a substance, as it is the form which determines the substance to be what it is. The soul in man is the form of the body, determining it to be a human body ; but the soul has an activity which intrinsically is immaterial—and this is proved by the fact that it has no material organ and that its object is the universal and absolute—therefore the soul itself, the subject of this activity, must be immaterial and subsistent. Subsistence means that it has a life of its own, and as this life is not that of a complete being but of a form looking by nature to this or that body, it is to be described as an incomplete substance. Not every particular substance is a hypostasis or person, but that alone which has the complete nature of its species. " Hence, a hand or a foot is not called a hypostasis or person ; nor likewise is the soul alone so called, since it is a part of the human species." [1]

The adversaries of St. Thomas were quick to see the consequences of this doctrine and to press the difficulties. If it is the form which specifies the matter, then the differences between Socrates and Plato can only be accidental. We have already touched on this difficulty in the chapter dealing with individuation, and attempted there to suggest

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 75, a. 4.

the answer St. Thomas could have given. Other objections are to the effect that it implicitly denies immortality, or, at any rate, makes the mode of existence of the soul after death unintelligible. That the soul is immortal seems to St. Thomas certain on his premisses. In the *Summa Contra Gentiles* he gathers together an imposing array of arguments. " Nothing," he says, " is destroyed by that which makes its perfection. But the perfection of the human soul consists in a certain withdrawal from the body ; for the soul is perfected by knowledge and virtue ; now in knowledge there is greater perfection the more the view is fixed on high generalisations or immaterial things, while the perfection of virtue consists in a man's not following his bodily passions, but tempering and restraining them by reason. Nor is it of any avail to reply that the perfection of the soul consists in its separation from the body in point of activity, but to be separated from the body in point of being is its destruction. For the activity of a thing shows its substance and follows upon its nature. . . ." Again, no form is destroyed except either by the action of the contrary, or by the destruction of the subject wherein it resides, or by the failure of its cause, and he argues that none of these causes is at work. Thirdly, a faculty of the soul is weakened only incidentally by the weakening of the body, as intellect by old age, because of the failing of the memory, and fantasy ; intrinsically the intellectual power does not follow the laws of decay of the body. Finally, there is within us the craving for immortality, and this craving as an expression of our nature cannot be without its fulfilment.

But what survives ? The Augustinian could answer, a complete being, the soul delivered from the body ; but for St. Thomas there is no complete being save the human, and he is made up of body as well as soul. He is bound, therefore, to deny the right of the surviving spirit to call itself a human person. A spirit, which is an incomplete

substance, survives, and of its state we can learn little from philosophy. St. Thomas maintains that the commensurations, that is, the proportion in human nature of form or soul to this and that particular body, "remain in souls even when their bodies perish, as the substances of the souls also remain, not being dependent on their bodies for their being." Again, those "activities remain which are not exercised through organs, and such are understanding and will." But since in this life even those activities are exercised with the help of phantasms, and there can be no phantasms without the body, probably the mode of knowledge will be "after the manner of those intelligences that subsist totally apart from bodies." "The human soul, being on the boundary line between corporeal and incorporeal substances, and dwelling as it were on the horizon of time and eternity, approaches the highest by receding from the lowest. Therefore, when it shall be totally severed from the body, it will be perfectly assimilated to the intelligences that subsist apart, and will receive their influence in more copious streams. Thus, then, though the mode of our understanding according to the conditions of the present life is wrecked with the wreck of the body, it will be replaced by another and higher mode of understanding."[1]

Another difficulty arises in connection with generation. The problem of Original Sin and the inheritance of it had drawn the attention of Christian thinkers to the origin of the human soul. In conformity with Christian tradition St. Thomas upheld the special creation of the soul. As intellectual it is essentially immaterial, and therefore of another order than that of matter; consequently it must come from without, *θύραθεν*, though the body is organised to a degree suited to be the matter of the form and to make one being with it. In accepting, however, the Aristotelian theory of successive forms, he found himself

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 81.

forced to say that in the womb forms succeed each other by generation and corruption until the perfection of the human form is reached. Quite apart from physiological weaknesses in this account, there are two serious objections which immediately come to the mind. If the rational soul comes from without, how can we speak of parents begetting human children? And secondly, if the embryo has at first only a vegetative form, then human parents beget not what is human but vegetative. In answer to the first St. Thomas says that "since the whole active power of nature stands in relation to God as an instrument to the prime and principal agent, we find no difficulty in the productive action of nature being terminated to a part only of that one term of generation, man, and not to the whole of what is produced by the action of God. The body then of man is formed at once by the power of God, the principal and prime agent, and by the power of the semen, the secondary agent. But the action of God produces the human soul, which the power of the male semen cannot produce, but only disposes thereto." His answer to the second is that though there is at first only a vegetative soul, nevertheless the whole process is towards the coming of a rational soul, and the beginnings have no bearing save in the light of what is to come. "Nor need we be uneasy in admitting the generation of an intermediate product, the existence of which is presently broken off, because such transitional links are not complete in their species; and therefore they are not engendered to endure, but as stages of being, leading up to finality in the order of generation." [1]

From the examples taken so far to illustrate the Thomist doctrine of the soul, it might be thought that it leads only to embarrassing situations. Generally, however, it is remarkable how easily and readily it fits in with accepted Christian doctrines and experience. For instance, an

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 88.

explanation has constantly been sought of the way in which the soul acts upon the body and directs its movements. The common habit is to invent an agent which superintends movement and acts upon the body by a kind of efficient causality, as a policeman directs traffic. Even the entelechy of certain modern psychologists seems to have this kind of function. The theory and language of St. Thomas are quite different, because he starts not with the conception of efficient, but of formal causality. The soul is not a force within a force, but the principle of unity and organisation, and the law of the nature. Consequently the action is not due so much to the soul as to the one being which is composed of form and matter, and there is no more need to appeal to some extra power to explain its movements than there is in the case of any physical object with a determinate nature and an activity appropriate to that nature. When again we speak of the soul acting upon, for example, the hand, we must interpret this as acting by means of the hand, as that mode of expression alone brings out the relationship of the two within the natural unity.

It is, however, in his theory of knowledge that the application and implications of this doctrine are best seen. Something has already been said of this theory so that it is necessary to dwell only on a few of its more distinctive features. The kind of knowledge that man has is measured exactly by the status which form has in the human compound. In the chapter on metaphysical principles human nature was set below that of the angels, or pure forms, because the form in man though subsistent, and therefore intelligent as well as intelligible, is darkened by matter. Mind in man is not intuitive but discursive reason ; the substance of the self is not discerned immediately but through its operations ; objects are not known exhaustively but abstractly, though directly, through concepts and with the aid of the senses ; and lastly, the mind is passive as well

as active, and needs to be fertilised in order to blossom into an act which is the perfection of itself. This explains the reason why St. Thomas is not content to state the fact of knowledge and leave it there as self-evident ; the mode of our knowledge has its mysteries which have to be explored, and the conditions of knowledge will obey the conditions in which the intellectual form finds itself. Now in man the form is the form of the body, hence the operation of the mind will be that of the one composite being, a man, an activity working by means of the body and in dependence upon it. As this is so, St. Thomas feels justified in setting up the machinery which alone makes this possible, sense experience, *species impressæ*, an *intellectus agens* and a *verbum mentis*. At a first glance the whole mechanism seems to be artificial and unreal, as fabulous as the entities below consciousness invented by the psycho-analysts. I cannot help feeling that St. Thomas is himself partly to blame for this impression, though not so much so as some of his disciples and commentators. It will be best to set down the process of knowledge first in its simplest form, and later to interpret it.

The human mind is at first like prime matter, nothing more than a capacity or faculty in potency to know, and it is stimulated to act through the channels of the senses. *Nihil est in intellectu nisi prius fuerit in sensu*, except the intellect itself. We start then with sensation. The external world impinges on the senses and is sensed by means of the sense-impression, the *species sensibilis* or *phantasma*. The various senses are differentiated and compared by a *sensus communis*, and their information is stored up and co-ordinated into habits by the memory, the imagination and a *vis æstimativa*. All still belongs to the concrete, individual and sensible world. In order that it should be known, that is, become intelligible, the phantasm has to undergo a similar transformation. This is performed by a power called the *intellectus agens*. " The active

intellect abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasm, forasmuch as by the power of the active intellect we are able to disregard the conditions of individuality and to take into our consideration the specific nature, the image of which informs the passive intellect."[1] The *intellectus agens* lights up, purifies, idealises—St. Thomas employs many paraphrases—the phantasm, and in doing so abstracts the intelligible form, the *species intelligibilis*, which thus becomes the datum of the *intellectus possibilis*. This latter corresponds roughly with what we mean in common language by mind, as it is the intellect in so far as it is capable of knowing all things. The process is finished off by the act of knowing proper. The *species impressa* determines the intellect to its act, and in that act, called *dictio* or *productio verbi mentalis*, the knower knows the object in the *species expressa*, the concept which he produces of it.

St. Thomas is so matter-of-fact in his way of describing this process, that it is tempting to understand the imagery literally, like a succession of scenes in a theatre. I do not think, however, that there can be any doubt that the account is metaphysical and that he is trying to analyse a mode of becoming that is spiritual on the analogy of physical becoming as seen in generation. It must be remembered that for him knowing is a living process wherein the self becomes all things, the process ending in the possession of other things as a perfection of the self. In God the act is wholly immanent because God possesses the perfections of all else superabundantly in his own essence. An angel, again, is not dependent on external experience in the same way as man, because in the mirror of its own rich essence it enjoys reality. But man starts a beggar; he has to be himself and to become himself by becoming all things. A man of vision or great intelligence has not a multitude of disconnected and haphazard ideas, but a

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 85, a. 1.

unified, concentrated outlook; he lives by the light of one idea. This idea, if complete, would be for St. Thomas the light of man's own self; all opaqueness having disappeared, it is the same thing to see oneself as one is and to know all truly with the vigour of that self. If now we turn back to the terminology of St. Thomas we shall find that he is only elaborating the necessary conditions and mode of this becoming. The " species," for instance, is not an object of knowledge, but *that whereby knowledge is made possible.* He is bound to admit certain passive and active factors, and to show how knowledge apprehends external objects as they are and at the same time completes a growth within, an assimilation. The factors he mentions are not to be taken as so many detached items; they are what must be understood as present somehow or other for the act to be intelligible.[1] The *schema*, again, is not meant as a proof of the objectivity of knowledge; it is concerned with its genesis, not its validity. Sensible experience certainly plays a part in knowledge; for it to

[1] The most suggestive and perhaps illuminating explanation that I know is to be found in an article of P. Rousselot, " L'Etre et l'Esprit " (*Revue de Philosophie*, juin 1910): " Il y a deux moments dans l'intellection humaine, le moment *attitude* et le moment *connaissance*; ou encore, le moment *sympathie* (*connaturalitas*) et le moment *représentation*. L'intellection, en effet, comme le dit souvent saint Thomas, requiert, ainsi que toute connaissance, une certaine identité, connaturalité ou ressemblance du connaissance et du connu. Il ne pourrait aucunement y avoir connaissance si l'âme ne s'exprimait *elle-même* en exprimant l'objet, et tel objet. If faut donc que l'intelligence soit rendue, au premier temps, semblable à la chose, communie, pour ainsi dire, à la nature de la chose (espèce impresse), pour qu'elle puisse, au second temps, exprimer la chose, connaître la chose, et comme se reconnaître dans la chose (espèce expresse). Ainsi l'espèce impresse, si elle est ' une ressemblance ' de la chose, n'en est pas une ressemblance pensée, conçue, elle est une certaine configuration de l'intelligence à la chose *per modum naturæ*; par elle l'intelligence se revêt de la forme de la chose, vibre à l'unisson de la chose, afin de pouvoir se la représenter. En ce premier moment l'intelligence semble s'oublier et devenir *l'autre* tout entière, et cette séduction, cet enchantement, cette fascination par une essence étrangère est nécessaire pour la spécification du concept, c'est à dire pour que le verbe, l'idée, représente telle essence plutôt que telle autre. En deux mots, l'espèce impresse est une sympathisation éclairante."

be objective and also lived, two factors are therefore requisite, a passive and an active. Again, the content of our knowledge is characterised by the object and in some relation to sensible experience, but it is abstract and universal, and the term of it is immanent ; therefore there must be some power in the mind which converts the sensible into its own life. This does not disfigure the object because the object has a noumenal or intelligible nature, so that at the end of the process the *intelligibile in actu* is the *intellectus in actu*, and in the *dictio mentis* the mind is aware of this, that is, of its conformity with the object.

There are two points in this account which need further elucidation. The first concerns the function of the *intellectus agens*, and the second the continuity in the process from sense to intellect. No more than the species is the *intellectus agens* to be thought of as something which is the object of consciousness ; it works *per modum naturæ*. It is a mistake, too, to hypostatise it. St. Thomas is quite aware of the dangerous temptation to substantiate the faculties. As he says : " Properly speaking, it is neither the sense nor the intellect which knows, but the man by means of them." Does, then, the *intellectus agens* simply mean the power of man to abstract the universal from the particular ? This is certainly one of its functions, though we must beware of imagining that the abstraction makes any physical change in the phantasm. But quite clearly the rôle of the *intellectus agens* includes far more than that of abstraction. He says definitely that " in every act in which man knows, both the *intellectus agens* and the *intellectus possibilis* play a part."[1] It not only produces the intelligible species, but keeps them in being ; it is responsible for the first principles of thought and being.[2] It is

[1] *V. De Veritate*, q. 10, a. 8, and *De Potent.*, q. 5, a. 1.

[2] " Oportet præexistere intellectum agentem habitui principiorum sicut causa ipsius " (*De Anima*, a. 5).

even the cause of our judgments.[1] Its function, therefore, is not merely like that of an attendant in a lift, to carry up the sensible to a higher storey, nor again to hand on to the *intellectus possibilis* a number of concepts to be filed and judged. St. Thomas is firmly convinced that the activity of mind is supreme in knowledge, and that therefore it is impossible to explain it in the empiricist way by supposing that it is caused by sense impressions, however vivid or ethereal. In man they are the material cause, though no word exactly covers their rôle. They are taken up by a superior power which reads their message. (St. Thomas tries to illustrate contact or change of key by the image of illumination, by matter and form, and by the comparison of instrumental and principal cause.) In the soul there is something *quo est omnia fieri, et aliquid quo est omnia facere.* It is this latter which is the *intellectus agens*, and the description brings out well what it does. Presented with the sensible phantasm it envelops it with the light of being. Here is the crucial point : " It must be said that our intellect both abstracts the intelligible species from the phantasms, in so far as it considers the natures of things in the universal, and it also as well understands them in the phantasms, because it cannot understand those things, whose species it abstracts, save by turning itself to the phantasms."[2] The *intellectus agens* makes us see the object of experience in its most abstract form, in *its being*, and the phantasm it is which helps the mind to apprehend it as this being. The unity which Kant sought for is furnished by St. Thomas in his *intellectus agens*. It constitutes the power the mind has to apprehend objects in their reality as being, and that is why he says that " intellectual cognition does not consist in the phantasms themselves, but in them it

[1] " Lumen intellectus agentis est nobis immediate impressum a Deo, secundum quod discernimus verum a falso et bonum a malo " (*De Spiritualibus Creaturis*, a. 10).

[2] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 85.

contemplates the purity of intelligible truth,"[1] and again, " that to know the first intelligible principles is the action belonging to the human species. Wherefore all men enjoy in common the power which is the principle of this action ; and this power is the active intellect."[2] These and other passages show that St. Thomas attributes to the active intellect what he in other places more generally ascribes to knowledge. In his theory of knowledge, as we saw in a former chapter, the mind is not restricted to phenomena, but passes beyond them and through them to the nature of reality, being. In doing so it is aware of the first principles, and by means of them it is able to distinguish within being and advance in knowledge of the nature of reality. Now we see more explicitly and in detail how it is that the phantasm is responsible for the phenomenal element in knowledge, and it is the active intellect which, brought into contact with experience, envisages it in the light of the first principles and being. Not only this, but we are offered an explanation of the distinction, so often utilised in the preceding pages, between the representation and significance of a concept. The natural mode of human knowledge is synthetic ; the *intellectus agens* needs the phantasm and the phantasm is earth-bound without the *intellectus agens*. The result is a concept, a child which takes after both parents. Representatively, then, "the object of our knowledge in our present state of life is the quiddity of a material object which it abstracts from the phantasm."[3] Whenever we think of a universal concreted in a subject, we cannot help representing the subject as individual, and so far forth material and numerable. The universal abstracted from a particular subject keeps as a universal a relation to an indefinite subject, and when in the synthetic act of judgment it is affirmed of reality as belonging to a subject, that subject,

[1] *S. Theol.*, II, IIae., q. 180, a. 5.
[2] *Ibid.*, Ia., q. 79, a. 5.
[3] *Ibid.*, Ia., q. 85, a. 8.

because of the phantasm, is material and quantitative. This limitation in the representative quality of our thought explains for St. Thomas many of the problems of predication in logic. It also explains why we are so much more at home with the phenomenal world than with the noumenal, and turn to science with its methods of measurement as the type of human thinking. The most common and universal characteristic provided by the phantasm is number, and were this the utmost range of our thought, we should be forced to acknowledge the truth of Kant's refutation of metaphysics. But for St. Thomas, while our thought is restricted representatively by the fraternisation of phantasm and active intellect in the one human act, the active intellect by its very nature carries us beyond the sensible to the intelligible world of being, and apprehends the content of sensible experience in the light of being and by the first principles.

To prevent misunderstanding of the above account we have to remember the solidarity through all its activities and faculties of the human act. The doctrine of the soul as the form of the body insures that the lower activities of the body and sensibility shall not be taken as independent functions, forms within a form. All that is in man is determined by his manhood ; the senses scout and make reconnaissances for the sake of the intellectual soul ; the phantasm has its end beyond itself, and when St. Thomas speaks of the mind returning on the phantasm to know the individual, he is only setting out in order what is a natural and integral act of the composite human being.

As corollaries of this doctrine St. Thomas teaches that the intellect knows neither itself by essence nor singulars directly. " As in this life our intellect has material and sensible things for its proper natural object . . . it understands itself according as it is made actual by the species abstracted from sensible things, through the light of the

active intellect, which not only actuates the intelligible things themselves, but also by their instrumentality actuates the passive intellect. Therefore the intellect knows itself not by its essence, but by its act. This happens in two ways; in the first place, singularly, as when Socrates or Plato perceives that he has an intellectual soul because he perceives that he understands. In the second place, universally, as when we consider the nature of the human mind from knowledge of the intellectual act." Again, " our intellect cannot know the singular in material things directly and primarily." The reason is that it is matter which individuates and the intellect abstracts the intelligible form from it, and that is universal. " Hence our intellect knows directly the universal only. But indirectly, and as it were by a kind of reflection, it can know the singular, because . . . even after abstracting the intelligible species, the intellect, in order to understand, needs to turn to the phantasms in which it understands the species. . . . Therefore it understands the universal directly through the intelligible species, and indirectly the singular represented in the phantasm. And thus it forms the proposition, Socrates is a man." There is no need to think that " indirectly by reflection " means here successively in time.[1] It ought to be now clear that the *intellectus agens* is not a conscious process. " The active intellect is not an object, rather is it that whereby the objects are made to be in act (*faciens objecta in actu*)." Were it on the objective side of thought, we should have a process in *infinitum*, as another active intellect would be required to explain its becoming an object, and besides it could not possibly have abstracted the universal from the particular without being conscious of the particular. What St. Thomas means, I think, is that when we think of a

[1] " We must conclude that knowledge of the singular and individual is prior, as regards us, to knowledge of the universal; as sensible knowledge is prior to intellectual knowledge " (*S. Theol.*, I, q. 5, a. 3).

man or dog, all the intelligible content is in the universal (there is no science of particulars), and so if the mind knows the particular, as it does, that knowledge must be indirect and by means of the phantasm.

The doctrine of universals is fairly easy to understand, though it is attached by all its fibres to the metaphysical principles. St. Thomas gives the gist of it when he is answering the objection that abstraction must lead to untruth as it misrepresents the nature of existent material objects. " If we understand or say that colour does not exist in a coloured body, or is separate from it, there would be error in this opinion or assertion. But if we consider colour and its properties, without reference to the apple which is coloured, or if we express in words what we thus understand, there is no error in such an opinion or assertion, because an apple is not essential to colour, and therefore colour can be understood independently of the apple. Likewise, the things which belong to the species of a material thing, such as a stone, or a man, or a horse, can be thought of apart from the individuating principles which do not belong to the notion of the species. This is what is meant by abstracting the universal from the particular, or the intelligible species from the phantasm ; that is by considering the nature of the species apart from its individual qualities represented by the phantasms. If therefore the intellect is said to be false when it understands a thing otherwise than as it is, that is so if the word ' otherwise ' refers to the thing understood ; for the intellect is false when it understands a thing otherwise than as it is ; and so the intellect would be false if it abstracted the species of a stone from its matter in such a way as to regard the species as not existing in matter, as Plato held. But it is not so if the word ' otherwise ' be taken as referring to the one who understands. For it is quite true that the mode of understanding, in one who understands, is not the same as the mode of a thing

existing ; since the thing understood is immaterially in the one who understands, according to the mode of the intellect, and not materially, according to the mode of the material thing."

The words on which to fasten in this explanation are that the mode of understanding is different from the mode of the thing existing. Material things are composed of matter and form ; it is the matter which individuates, the form which is intelligible. As already suggested in a former chapter, the form, were it not for the multiple uses of the word, might almost be called idea. Its mode of existence in matter makes it unintelligible to itself, but nevertheless potentially intelligible. When actually intelligible it is a thought actually terminating the activity of a thinker. *Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu.* What, then, happens when a thing becomes an object of the mind is that it is dematerialised. Now as the part played by matter is to make the form particular, this individual instance of a species, all that is required for it to become an object of the mind, or a concept, is that it should be stripped of its individuation. The form now, which was differentiated in innumerable individuals by matter, is one *in se* and can be considered scientifically independently of its embodiments and as holding true indifferently of any instance of it. But while *unum in se* it is of itself without a subject and therefore indeterminate, unless it be of its nature a subsistent form. Then, as in the case of an angel, it is determinate and incommunicable. " Every form as such is universal, unless it happen to be a subsistent form, which, by the very fact that it subsists, is incommunicable."[1] Humanity is not a subsistent form ; it looks perforce to a subject in which it is concreted and made determinate. And as that concretion can add nothing to its meaning or form, but merely individuate it and multiply it, the universal is *multiplex*

[1] *De Veritate*, I, 6.

potentia;—*unum in se, multiplex potentia* is St. Thomas' definition of the universal. Briefly to repeat, the universal is fundamentally in things and formally in the mind. The mind is not first aware of particular things, and from a collection of them at pains to make out a common character. On such a theory matter would do more than individuate; it would characterise, and we should be at a loss to know whether our concepts were founded in reality or at most descriptive. St. Thomas brings reality and concept together by the form. We apprehend the universal, and the universal is the form of things without the matter which individuates it, and hence the mode of understanding and the mode of existence can differ without any danger of error being introduced thereby. The direct universal is the real object *intelligibile in actu*, the reflex is that same object but considered now in its universality, as when, for example, after having apprehended a man we turn to reflect upon the nature of humanity.

The doctrine of universals is worked out consistently with the general theory of man's nature. Half body and half spirit, his mode of knowledge is determined by his weakness and his strength. His mind, which apprehends being, finds its natural pasture among material things, and even there it is dependent on the phantasm for its knowledge of singulars. The singular, as such, is not an obstacle to knowledge. As St. Thomas says: "to be understood is repugnant to the singular not as such, but as material, for nothing can be understood otherwise than immaterially." But even as regards material things man's knowledge is much inferior to that of God or angels.

CHAPTER IX

ETHICS

A LARGE portion of the *Summa* is devoted to a consideration of the end of man and to the virtues, and the chapters or articles make comparatively easy reading, for the reason that metaphysics is less in evidence. The same reason, however, makes it an almost impossible task to summarise the whole and to do justice to the wealth of detail. There are other difficulties also. The Ethics is in the Aristotelian mould, but all the while a subtle transformation is going on, indiscernible often in the treatment of particular topics and fully evident only in the general result. The ethics of Aristotle may be said to be rich and definite in detail and vague and halting in direction. The Christian moralist and philosopher, St. Thomas, has no doubt about the direction, and has all the wealth of Christian experience to help him in his analysis of virtue and vice.

We may expect, then, to find the notion of an end, the distinctions of the voluntary and the involuntary, the doctrine of the mean, the classification of the virtues, and other well-known features of the Aristotelian ethics re-appearing in the teaching of St. Thomas, with, as I say, differences. It is almost amusing, in fact, to watch how the saint turns the rather unprepossessing intellectualism of the other into the vision of God, and makes a somewhat worldly-minded moralist the advocate of holiness. They both start with the theory of an end, and a common end, for all men. The subject matter of ethics is the good. Now good, as we have seen in the chapter on metaphysics, has to do with desire or appetite. Every agent acts

for some end; wherever we find movement, that movement is determinate and directed towards some good. More definitely, everything that has a nature acts in a way determined by its form, according to the law of its being, and that action is good in so far as it tends to the perfection or full actuality of the nature. "Each thing is perfect in so far as it is in act." The notion of end is as fundamental and necessary as the notion of being itself. St. Thomas puts this shortly as follows. "Every agent must intend some end in his action, sometimes the action itself, sometimes something produced by the action. . . . To an agent that did not tend to any definite effect, all effects would be indifferent. But what is indifferent to many things, does not do one of them rather than another; hence from an agent to whom both sides of an alternative are open, there does not follow any effect, unless by some means it comes to be determined to one above the rest; otherwise it could not act at all. . . . That to which an agent tends must be suited to it; for it would not tend to the thing except for some suitability to itself. But what is suitable to a thing is good for it. Therefore every agent acts for some good."

Everything therefore acts for its good, and the good is the perfection or excellence of the agent. Irrational beings tend to this unconsciously, by nature and instinct, while rational beings do so consciously. Irrational beings again are determined in this tendency, while rational beings determine themselves. Where the movement is conscious to the agent, he is conscious of his own desires, and his own form is the law to him, telling him what is conformable to it and what is not. The word "right" is the appropriate word for such a tendency, and hence an action which is good is called right. Right therefore falls within the good, though it is not co-extensive with it. Human or moral good, again, should be studied as the perfection of the human kind, and therefore as an example of good in

general and not as something apart without any analogy in other natures. Everything has its end ; the task of the philosopher is to find out the specific end of man.

What, then, is it in man which makes him specifically different from other things ? The answer of St. Thomas is that man possesses reason and will, and therefore moves himself to his end and has dominion over his actions. Other things have a natural inclination or appetite ; he has a rational inclination. And this means that the end is before him as an idea and ideal, and that he determines himself by this ideal as by a final cause. He, so to speak, projects himself before himself and has to try to be the perfect man he sees he ought to be. In this he is distinct from all that is irrational. His freedom also and consciousness of obligation follow from this power to conceive the good with the mind. Those things which have a natural appetite and are determined by their nature have, St. Thomas says, a good which is particular, " but the object of the will is the end, and the good is universal." In other words, the mind has for its object what is absolute. Just as truth, the object of the intellect, is not pragmatic, not a personal convenience, but something which imposes itself upon us, so too the object of the will is the good, not as personal delectation or for utility, but as it is in itself. Not that the good ceases to be the end and perfection of man ; that cannot be, for then it could not appear to him as good at all. The paradox is that a being possessed with a mind cannot reach its perfection save in so far as it yields itself to the absolute standard of truth and goodness and is obedient to conscience instead of pursuing private pleasure.

It is easy to see how St. Thomas would interpret the so-called sense of duty and the categorical imperative. Aristotle has been accused of leaving no room for duty in his system, and of having made the initial mistake of subordinating all to the end of happiness. Whatever be

said of Aristotle, it is certain that St. Thomas would have refused to admit the sharp distinction between right and good, duty and the end of happiness or well-being. The good for man must appeal to him as his duty, for the reason that he is possessed of a mind and will which of their natures move in the world of the absolute. Therefore man is a moral being and has for his criterion what is in accord with right reason, and by the very law implanted in his being and manifested in conscience knows what he ought to do and to avoid in order to be perfect.[1]

It is not necessary for him that he should have a clear and definite idea of what his ideal state will be like. It is sufficient that he should know the direction, and that direction is given by his form. "Voluntary acts receive their specification from the end, which is the end of the will. But that from which anything receives its specification is to be regarded as a kind of form in physical things.[2] And so it is that the form of any voluntary act is, in some sense, the end to which it is directed; first, because it receives its specification from it, and secondly, because the mode of the action must correspond proportionately with the end." That is to say, that just as the ideal form directs, by a kind of causality, all the efforts of a painter or poet, making him see this or that expression of it and reject others, though all the while the beloved form is vague and waiting on its realisation, so too the end and ideal of man has a virtual and dynamic influence on all

[1] There is a distinction between the absolute of truth which imposes itself on the intellect, and the absolute of duty. St. Thomas holds that the analysis of the latter is not complete without reference to God. There is an analogy between conscience and law. In both we are commanded. Law, however, rests on an external legitimate authority, but in conscience the command of God is also the law of one's own nature.

[2] "Propria illud assignatur objectum alicujus potentiæ . . . sub cujus ratione omnia referuntur ad potentiam" (*S. Theol.*, I, i, a. 7). This distinction between the object and the *ratio sub qua* it is known, is of great assistance to the understanding of many points in the Thomist system.

his choices. His end, which is his good, is at first as vague as being itself, and only grows determinate in the successive attempts to realise it; it "pipes him to pastures," but he has to wander far before the paradise unwittingly pursued comes to him in vision.

The reason for this is, according to St. Thomas, simply that man is composed of matter and form. The explanation given in the preceding chapter of the nature of human knowledge accounts also for human conduct and desire. There it was said that owing to the concurrence of the *intellectus agens* and the phantasm, the object of the intellect was universal conceived in terms of being and regulated by the first principles of being, and the abstract had to be concreted with the help of the phantasm. Similarly, in the order of conduct, because man is neither mind nor body, but one being composed of both, he conceives the good in the vague and has to grow in knowledge of it and in virtue by the help of concrete choices in which the good is determined by specific ends and individual circumstances. We need not be surprised, therefore, to find St. Thomas telling us constantly that the object of the will is universal, *bonum in communi*, and that man has a set of first principles in the practical order, corresponding to the first principles in the order of knowledge, which go by the name of *synderesis*.

The general standpoint of St. Thomas can be easily summed up as follows: man is composed of matter and spirit. Having such a nature he has also a definite end or good, and that will be good for him which is in accordance with the law of his nature and tends to its perfection. But being spirit, with the immanent activity of a spirit, he is conscious of himself to some extent and of the law of his being; again, being spirit, he is aware of objective truth and objective goodness; in other words, he is aware of an absolute standard. He must bow to truth and follow goodness as a duty. It is his reason which

is his specific characteristic, and it is reason which gives him absolute standards. Therefore he must act according to right reason, and he must regulate the various tendencies in him by this criterion. All that tends to the perfection of his manhood will be good because it is natural; but as this nature is revealed to him in consciousness in his reason, he must develop his body, his sensitive powers, his instincts, his social, mental and artistic inclinations, not irresponsibly, but by that rule revealed to him in consciousness, which is for him as fundamental as the first principles of being and truth. This rule of conscience is his guide. Owing to his composite nature he is drawn by the natural pressure of his own being to what is good for him, but he discerns that good only in the haze of the abstract. He grows more conscious of the true nature of his good and of his end, the more he realises himself and his form by successive choices of the good actions requisite here and now for his advance in virtue. And since of the good things presented to his mind in that necessary movement of his nature to its fulfilment there is no one which completes him and absorbs all the love of his being, he has to choose, and being under no compulsion he is free.

This brief outline must now be filled out. St. Thomas first proves that man is no exception to his general rule that all beings must act for an end. "Whatever actions proceed from a power, are caused by that power in accordance with the nature of its object. But the object of the will is the end and the good. Therefore all human actions must be for an end." Then he shows in what way a rational nature acts for an end. Every agent moves to produce a determinate effect or end; otherwise it would not do one thing rather than another. In things below man this determination is effected by the natural appetite, in man by the rational appetite, because man moves himself and has dominion over his actions. There are many

minor ends which man pursues, but as he is one being, so he has one last end. "It is impossible to proceed indefinitely in the matter of ends, from any point of view. For in whatsoever things there is an essential order of one to another, if the first be removed, those that are ordained to the first must of necessity be removed also." Both in the order of intention and in the order of execution there must be something first. "For that which is first in the order of intention is the principle, as it were, moving the appetite; consequently, if you remove this principle, there will be nothing to move the appetite. On the other hand the principle in execution is that wherein operation has its beginning; and if this principle be taken away, no one will begin to work. Now the principle in the intention is the last end; while the principle in execution is the first of the things which are ordained to the end. Consequently on neither side is it possible to go on to infinity." Not only this, but whatsoever a man wills he wills for this last end. This is evident for two reasons. "First because whatever man desires, he desires it under the aspect of good. And if he desire it, not as his perfect good, which is the last end, he must of necessity desire it as tending to the perfect good, because the beginning of anything is always ordained to its completion; as is clearly the case in effects both of nature and of art. . . . Secondly, because the last end stands in the same relation in moving the appetite as the first mover in other movements."

In his next chapter St. Thomas discusses the nature of this last end. He calls this last end "happiness," not as forestalling his conclusion, but as defining the completion of the rational appetite. It is the perfection or act or well-being of the self. He tries at length to prove that it cannot consist in wealth or honours or fame or power or any bodily good or pleasure, or good of the soul. As to this last, he makes a distinction. "If we speak of man's last end, as to the attainment or possession thereof, or as to

any use whatever of the thing itself desired as an end, then something of man, in respect of his soul, does indeed belong to his last end; since man attains happiness through his soul. Therefore the thing itself which is desired as end, is that which constitutes happiness, and makes man happy; but the attainment of this thing is called happiness. Consequently we must say that happiness is something belonging to the soul; but that which constitutes happiness is something outside the soul." He goes on then to examine other possibilities, rejecting them all until he comes to God, and he concludes that "final and perfect happiness can consist in nothing else than the vision of the divine essence."

From the passage just quoted it appears that St. Thomas distinguishes between happiness as referring to the object which gives completion to the desire of the soul, and the enjoyment of it. In a very significant passage he joins up the latter with his favourite metaphysical doctrine that the perfection of knowledge consists in the fusion of subject and object in one act. "It is clear that the ultimate beatitude or happiness of man lies in his noblest activity, the understanding, whose ultimate perfection must consist in this, that our intellect is united with its active principle. For it is then that what is passive becomes perfect when it belongs to the active factor in it, which gives it its perfection." That is to say that when we are fully actual we shall be like the music of Bach's *Mass*, if it could be aware of itself, subject and object, agent and patient, fusing in one act of happiness. And as it is the intellect which opens up this possibility, and tends to it as to its perfection, St. Thomas without hesitation assigns the perfection and happiness of man to the intellect.

To understand this primacy conferred by St. Thomas on the intellect, we must never forget that in his best thought he always looks upon it as a kind of life, whose perfection it is to possess in the intimacy of itself the natures of other

things. The intellect therefore possesses, the will is for what is not as yet possessed. Therefore, despite the criticism of the Franciscan school, which gave the primacy to love, St. Thomas places perfection in the active repose of the intellect united with the object of its desire. Happiness is in the Beatific Vision and in knowing another even as one knows oneself. He does, however, find room for love, but not on the grounds offered by his opponents. Where the object contemplated surpasses in any way the subject, there the union contains within it the highest form of love. The race is more than the individual, the State than any one member ; the union, therefore, of any member in a whole which is greater than himself means that the member enjoys the unity and is made perfect in it, and at the same time is made perfect precisely as being a member and loving what is more than himself. That is pre-eminently true of God and the soul. God surpasses the soul infinitely, and so the soul loves God more than itself, but there is no conflict in the two loves. Altruism and egoism belong to one act. The self possesses God as a cell might possess and enjoy the life of the body, and it is of its very perfection to give itself in love to the Whole of which it is a member.

That God is the last end of man can be proved either by starting from the proved existence of God or from a consideration of the nature of man and of his rational desire. By the nature of his mind and will man desires truth and goodness. They are seen at first abstractly, and goodness is the *ratio sub qua* different objects before the mind are desired, and just as the mind cannot be satisfied save by a vision of absolute truth, so too desire is left unsatisfied until an object qualitatively perfect more than appeases that rational appetite which is stimulated by goodness universally, and has no particular or private good as its end. " The object of the intellect is what a thing is, that is, the essence of a thing. . . . Wherefore

the intellect attains perfection in so far as it knows the essence of a thing. . . . If, therefore, the human intellect, knowing the essence of some created effect, knows no more of God than that he is, the perfection of that intellect does not yet reach simply the First Cause, but there remains in it the natural desire to seek the cause. Wherefore it is not yet perfectly happy. Consequently, for perfect happiness the intellect needs to reach the very essence of the First Cause."[1]

A very interesting question here arises, whether St. Thomas holds that the mind has a natural capacity of understanding God as he is. As so put, the question must be answered in the negative, as it was a part of his faith that only by a special gift of God can man enjoy the Beatific Vision, which is the technical phrase for a knowledge of God as he is in himself. God surpasses all understanding, human or angelic, by so much as the infinite exceeds the finite. He alone can know his own essence. This is certain, and is a part of the philosophy of St. Thomas as well as of the Christian faith. It would appear, then, that it cannot be the natural end of man to see God in his essence. Nevertheless St. Thomas says quite definitely that "every intelligence naturally desires the vision of the divine substance,"[2] and reiterates this in several places. The difficulty concerns directly only those who share his religious beliefs, as it has to do with the relation of the natural and the supernatural, but it illustrates how closely morality and the Christian religion are connected in St. Thomas' mind. Without this intuition of God his doctrine of morals has no head, and not only his moral ideal but his theory of knowledge, his distinction between reason and intellect, are left in mid air.[3] Of

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., IIae., q. 3, a. 8. [2] *Contra Gent.*, III, 57.

[3] For a suggestive and much-discussed interpretation of the texts in St. Thomas, *v.* P. de Broglie, *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Mai-Août 1924, Janvier-Février 1925, and *Archives de Philosophie*, Vol. III, cahier II, 1925.

course the commentators of St. Thomas have offered solutions of the difficulty, and one of them worked out recently must be mentioned because of its revolutionising effect upon Thomistic criticism. The aim of this view is to reverse the relation between God and finite things as usually stated by Thomists in the theory of knowledge. Certain formulæ sum it up. Man is not *capax Dei* because he is *capax entis*; he is able to know being because he can know God. Again, *prius intenditur deiforme quam homo.* Drawing out the expression of Dionysius, *patiens divina,* they describe man as one who can bear God without rupture of his finite being. Man's soul, as Tauler affirmed, is an abyss ever open. Man is not capable by his own powers of knowing the essence of God, but he is by nature of a sort to be made capable. It is in this light, so it is said, that we have to understand certain texts of St. Thomas. "By the very fact that the soul has been made in the image of God, it is capable of God by grace." "It was proved above that every intellect naturally desires the vision of the divine substance. Now a natural desire cannot be in vain. Any and every created intelligence, then, can arrive at a vision of the divine substance; and inferiority of nature is no impediment."[1]

The advocates of this view go still further. They adopt what is best in ontologism and escape the obvious objections to that theory. St. Thomas is firm in maintaining that we have no intuition of God, that God is not the first-known object of our mind, but he does say that "to know God's existence in a general and confused way is congenital to us by nature, in so far, forsooth, as God is the beatitude of man; for man naturally desires beatitude, and what is naturally desired by man is naturally known by him." This knowledge, however, as has been made plain before, is not a direct and distinct knowledge. It resembles, rather, that of the artist who knows and yet does not know

[1] *Contra Gent.*, III, 57.

what he wants. The ideal is the end which directs his efforts and criticises his many failures. So, too, God is the consummate being by the standard of whom we pass judgment in knowledge, assigning finiteness and indigence to the objects of our experience. It is in this sense that man is *capax entis* because he is *capax Dei.* Similarly, in our appreciation of goodness, and in our movement towards our last end. " All knowing things know God implicitly in every object of knowledge. (*Omnia cognoscentia cognoscunt implicite Deum in quolibet cognito.*) For just as nothing is desirable save in so far as it is a likeness of the prime goodness, so nothing is knowable save as a likeness of the prime truth." Elaborated still further this means that all knowledge and all desire are but the expression of the fundamental desire of our nature to " be " perfectly and to live our essence intuitively and integrally. We seek ourselves, and in seeking ourselves we seek God ; or rather " man tends to his own good because he tends to the divine likeness, and not *vice versa.*" The object which defines and invites the intelligence and the will is God. Owing to the imperfection of our nature and its acts we see all in a haze by the light of being, but the force of the inclination, the dynamic factor, is the vision of the divine goodness. We are *ex Deo ad Deum.* " It is," as P. Rousselot says, " the love of God which draws us on, and we are unconscious of it. Without ceasing we follow after the first Truth and know it not. The love of God is, as it were, solidified in us in unconscious nature. It is this which gives to our intellectual certainties their character of impersonal coldness and of evidence forced upon us. It is our own blindness which makes us see in such a way. If our nature were for us an object of intuition, if instead of seeking ourselves we possessed ourselves, then perceiving all things only through the vision of our own essence, and by their connaturality with our essence, we should know all sympathetically. We should

be aware of the love which guides us, we should see, so to speak, issue from ourselves the law which defines our love, we should feel the kinship of our object with ourselves." As the artist knows himself in his poem, and God knows things in loving himself in them, so too the self in its full expression and in the intuition of it would vibrate in unison with all the objects possessed in that knowledge; and, what is more, it would know itself at home in him from whose hands it issued and to whose embrace it has returned.

A debt is due to the commentators on St. Thomas who have brought out this side of his thought. There are texts undoubtedly which suggest it, and St. Thomas, who knew Aristotle and his reminder that God moves all things as object of their love, cannot have failed to realise the significance of his words. The fact, too, that Dante utilises the same conception shows that the disciples of the saint were conscious of this aspect of his doctrine. Nevertheless it is strange that he did not dwell more frequently on what, if developed, would have given such a different setting to many of his principal theories. The truth seems to be that this interpretation has a foundation in the writings of St. Thomas, but that he was preoccupied with other lines of thought, and that it is not at all certain that he would have approved of some of the conclusions which this modern school of Thomists have affixed to his name.

Of the other doctrines in the Ethics two may be singled out as illustrating his intellectual point of view. Conscience is for him not a power nor a sense nor special faculty, but an "act." It is a practical judgment or knowledge applied to an individual case. For instance, "we recognise that we have done or not done something . . . and, according to this, conscience is said to witness. In another way, so far as through the conscience we judge that something should be done or not done, and in this sense, conscience

is said to incite or to bind. In the third way, so far as by conscience we judge that something done is well done or ill done, and in this sense conscience is said to excuse, accuse or torment. Now it is clear that all these things follow the actual application of knowledge to what we do. Wherefore, properly speaking, conscience denominates an act. But since habit is a principle of act, sometimes the name conscience is given to the first natural habit, namely, synderesis."[1] *Synderesis* corresponds in the practical order to the habit of first principles in the speculative order. They are what St. Augustine calls rules and seeds of virtue, both true and unchangeable in so far as they can be called a habit. To complete this account it should be added that this habit gives at first only elementary moral distinctions and has to be developed; and as it is the whole man with feelings and passions who grows and judges, there is nothing surprising in the fact that there have been great variations in the application of the first moral principles according to race and environment and stage of civilisation. The variation is in no way inconsistent with the fact that man has a specific nature, and consequently one specific good and one unchanging natural law revealed in "conscience" and reflecting the Eternal Law.

In conscience, in the application, that is, of knowledge to a particular case of conduct, man is conscious of free will. The best discussion of this is to be found in the *De Veritate*, but the principles of the explanation are given shortly in the *Contra Gentiles*. The large part assigned to the intellect is again striking. "Only self-determining agents have liberty of action; and these alone are guided in their action by judgment. A self-determining agent is made up of two elements, one determining and another determined. The element determined is the appetite; and that is determined either by intellect, or by fantasy, or by sense; for to these powers it belongs to judge. Of

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., q. 79, a. 12.

such self-determining agents, those alone judge freely which determine their own judgment. But no faculty of judging determines its own judgment unless it reflects upon its own act. If, then, it is to determine itself to judge, it must know its own judgment; and that knowledge belongs to intellect alone."[1] It is, therefore, not so much in free action as in free judgment that free will consists. For the judgment to be free, "the agent must be guided by some higher form or idea in his apprehension. This idea can be no other than the universal idea (*ratio ipsa*) of goodness or fitness, by aid whereof a judgment is formed of any given definite good, fit or suitable thing." Now though individual acts are good they do not exhaust the idea of goodness. The finite object solicits but does not compel assent, because it can be criticised. "The universal contains in potentiality many particular objects. Therefore the application of the intellectual concept may be made to many divers objects; and consequently the judgment of the understanding about things to be done is not determined to one thing only." It is clear, therefore, that St. Thomas bases his doctrine on the power of the mind to apprehend the good universally. Every particular good, therefore, whatever its attraction, leaves the will free, as it is reminded by the intellect that there are other objects of attraction. If it be said that nevertheless the will must take the higher good, the answer is, that if such a comparison be possible and have a meaning, the will *ought* to do so, but in no way can be compelled to do so, "as the will of an intelligent subsistent being is not determined by nature except to good in general. . . ." "Therefore all intelligent agents have free will, arising out of the judgment of the understanding; and free will is defined as 'a free judgment on the matter of a specific notion or general concept' (*Liberum de ratione judicium*)."

The remainder of the Ethics must be sketched very

[1] *Contra Gent.*, II, 48.

rapidly despite the labour and space St. Thomas gave to this portion of his philosophy. He follows Aristotle in his distinction of the voluntary and the involuntary, and in his account of the influence of feeling and passion on will and judgment. The goodness or badness of the human act is decided by the end in view, the means taken, and the circumstances. These three factors can be described in terms of "matter," "form," and accidents. Actions which take place can therefore be called moral only in so far as they are chosen by the will and discussed by the mind as good or bad for the end of the human appetite. Hence the expression "right action" may be very easily misleading. The criterion of morality is what is according to right reason. When an action is proposed by the mind to the will it is adopted as tending to the end of the agent, and it is judged so to tend by means of *synderesis*, that is to say, the habit of right principles which are indigenous to the mind in rudimentary form and developed by right exercise. The human reason does not, as has been already shown, decree what is good for it and so measure goodness by its private taste. It is of the nature of the mind to be measured by absolute truth and goodness. Hence it recognises a moral law which it is its duty to obey. The simplest expression of this is that good must be done and evil avoided, but this fundamental law has many subsidiary clauses in the specific ends which are to be found in the world of ends which opens before the mind. To pervert the function of speech, which is for truth, by lying, is intrinsically wrong as against right reason. To give way to carnal pleasure or to commit fornication and adultery, to eat and drink too much, to rob one's neighbour and take life, are all perversions of instincts or functions which are directed to certain legitimate ends. To choose one of those ends is to act morally. The external act of itself adds nothing to the morality of the choice. "If we speak of that goodness of the exterior

act which it has from the goodness of the end, then to such goodness the exterior act adds nothing except it happen that the will itself becomes better in good actions or worse in evil ones. . . . If, however, we speak of the goodness of the exterior act, which it has in point of matter and due circumstances, in that way it stands to the will as a term and end, and thus it adds to the goodness or evil of the will; because every inclination or movement is perfected by gaining its end or attaining its term."[1] The agent, therefore, is not to be blamed for the effects which follow on a specific act unless they were foreseen or intrinsically bound up with it. St. Thomas distinguishes between the *finis operis* and the *finis operantis*. A man may give gifts to hospitals for vanity; the *finis operis* is good but the act is made evil by the intention. A man may rob to assist a friend. The act is in itself wrong, formally so if he knows it to be wrong, materially if he thinks it to be right. A man finally may steal to commit adultery. Here, as Aristotle says, the man is more an adulterer than he is a robber.

Working on these lines St. Thomas gives an admirable analysis of the virtues and vices after a close study of the meaning of habit. Quite apart from the details and deft touches which show his interest in human nature the account is memorable as harmonising the Aristotelian and Stoic and Neo-Platonic ideals with those of Christian asceticism and spirituality. He does not desert his intellectualistic standpoint. Virtue is still the excellence of an appetite or faculty, and he loves justice because by it the splendour of law and order is revealed and preserved. Wisdom, too, as might be expected of one who incarnated the ideal of the Sapiential books stands in the highest rank. We see, in fact, how St. Thomas meant to fill out the ideal which appears in the theory of knowledge. There man was said to have the capacity of knowing all

[1] *S. Theol.*, Ia., IIae., q. 28, a. 6.

things. In complete self-realisation he would possess all else in possessing himself. This is not all. In the Ethics we see that it is God who is the last end of the soul, and that it is the vision of God which floods the heart with joy. But though this life of union with Divine Love leaves nothing further to be desired, it omits mention of those differences between man and man which make life so dear and personal. This gap is filled up in the *Secunda Secundæ* of the *Summa*. There we see the ideal life, not of the intellect nor of the will, but of man. St. Thomas is fully conscious of the part which the body plays in the development of character. His own character was very different from those of his friends, King Louis and Bonaventure. Within the uniformity of human ideals he saw how saint differed from saint, nation from nation, European from Turk. The period was one of striking and original characters. They peer out of the pages of the *Inferno* and the *Purgatorio*, grim and pathetic ; they live in story and legend of popular heroes and saints. All this variety in holiness and wickedness is reproduced in the pages of the *Secunda Secundæ*. The love of order, too, and the principles which govern society as well as the individual are there, all the virtues, in fact, which made for the well-being of Christian life in the thirteenth century.

The ideal man of St. Thomas and the ideal life are portrayed in these pages. But lest the reader should be cheated it is necessary to state that here the separation made by St. Thomas between philosophy and dogma, ethics and the Christian religion, breaks down. The moral order known by natural reason is only a beginning. There is no journey's end to the good life in this world ; it remains ever incomplete. There is no certain victory over evil, no assured balance in favour of justice and happiness. Even were they not known from other sources, the unharvested moral fields would postulate a hereafter and a God. As a philosopher St. Thomas claims the right to

insert a doctrine of merit into his ethical teaching, and so provide an equivalent in eternity for every passing good action, and to teach also that beatitude can be found after death in completeness of being with God. But the full story can be discovered only by revelation, and naturally enough in his final survey he sees human nature uplifted with grace and adorned like a bride for union with the godhead. The goal of humanity is, in his eyes, a supernatural felicity consisting of the Beatific Vision of God seen as he is in himself in his essence.

This perspective is given for us in the opening chapter of the fourth book of the *Summa Contra Gentiles*, and as it also gives in a compendium his whole philosophy, with it we may fittingly conclude: "'Lo, these things that have been said are but a part of his ways; and whereas we have heard scarce one little drop of his speech, who shall be able to look upon the thunder of his greatness?' (Job xxvi. 14). It is the nature of the human mind to gather its knowledge from sensible things; nor can it of itself arrive at the direct vision of the divine substance, as that substance is in itself raised above all sensible things and all other beings to boot, and beyond all proportion with them. But because the perfect good of man consists in his knowing God in such a way as he can, there is given man a way of ascending to the knowledge of God, to the end that so noble a creature should not seem to exist altogether in vain, unable to attain the proper end of his existence. The way is this, that as all the perfections of creatures descend in order from God, who is the height of perfection, man should begin from the lower creatures, and ascend by degrees, and so advance to the knowledge of God. Of this descent of perfection from God there are two processes. One is on the part of the first origin of things; for the divine wisdom, to make things perfect, produced them in order, that the universe might consist of a complete round of creatures from highest to lowest. The other process

belongs to the things themselves ; for, as causes are nobler than effects, the first and highest products of causation, while falling short of the First Cause, which is God, nevertheless are superior to the effects which they themselves produce ; and so on in order, until we come to the lowest of creatures. And because in that 'roof and crown of all things' (*summo rerum vertice*), God, we find the most perfect unity ; and everything is stronger and more excellent, the more thoroughly it is one ; it follows that diversity and variety increase in things the further they are removed from him who is the first principle of all. Therefore the process of derivation of creatures from their first principle may be represented by a sort of pyramid, with unity at the apex, and the widest multiplicity at the base. And thus, in the diversity of things, there is apparent a diversity of ways, beginning from one principle and terminating in different terms. By these ways, then, our understanding can ascend to God.

"But the weakness of our understanding prevents us from knowing these ways perfectly. Our knowledge begins with sense ; and sense is concerned with exterior accidents (phenomena), which are of themselves sensible, as colour, smell, and the like. With difficulty can our mind penetrate through such exterior phenomena to an inner knowledge of things, even where it perfectly grasps by sense their accidents. Much less will it be able to attain to a comprehension of the natures of those objects of which we perceive only a few phenomena by sense ; and still less of those natures, no accidents of which lie open to sense, but certain effects only which they produce, inadequate to their power, whereby we are able to recognise them. But even though the very natures of things were known to us, still we should have but slight knowledge of their order, of their mutual relations, and direction by divine providence to their final end, since we cannot penetrate the plan of providence. The ways themselves, then, being

so imperfectly known to us, how shall we travel by them to any perfect knowledge of the First Beginning of all things, which transcends all created ways and is out of all proportion with them? Even though we knew the said ways perfectly, we should still fall far short of perfect knowledge of their origin and starting-point.

"Feeble, then, and inadequate being any knowledge to which man could arrive by these ways, God has revealed to men facts about himself which surpass human understanding; in which revelation there is observed an order of gradual transition from imperfect to perfect. In man's present state, in which his understanding is tied to sense, his mind cannot possibly be elevated to any clear discernment of truths that surpass all proportions to sense; in that state the revelation is given him, not to be understood, but to be heard and believed. Only when he is delivered from the thraldom of sensible things will he be elevated to an intuition of revealed truths. Thus there is a threefold knowledge that man may have of divine things. The first is an ascent through creatures to the knowledge of God by the natural light of reason. The second is a descent of divine truth by revelation to us; truth exceeding human understanding; truth accepted, not as demonstrated to sight, but as orally delivered for belief. The third is an elevation of the human mind to a perfect insight into things revealed."

PART III

CHAPTER X

§ 1. LATER HISTORY OF THOMISM

St. Thomas, in the perspective of history, has come to be accepted as the representative philosopher and theologian of the thirteenth century. The researches, however, of modern scholars have made it certain that he did not attain this position without a struggle, that, in fact, there was a moment towards the end of his life when other views than his almost prevailed. The crisis in Paris brought him back there from Italy, and from 1269 till 1271 he had to defend himself in pamphlets and public disputes against the attacks of the Averrhoistic party, the Augustinians, and even the more conservative amongst his own brethren. John Peckham tried to bully St. Thomas in a public argument and looked back upon the encounter with satisfaction. Kilwardby, a fellow Dominican, the predecessor of Peckham in the see of Canterbury, did his best to check the success of Thomist doctrines in England, both before and after his accession to the Archbishopric. Partly through the efforts of these two, but mainly for other reasons, personal and national, Oxford never became the home of Thomism. There were a number of English philosophers who adopted it wholeheartedly, like William of Mackelfield and Thomas Sutton; the Dominican faculty, true to a regulation of the General Assembly of its chapter in 1279, taught it openly, and the principal doctrines crept unobtrusively into the traditions of the University. Nevertheless, it does not appear that the Oxford decrees of 1277 censuring certain doctrines, ineffective as they proved, were ever formally rescinded.

Roger Bacon also, and Duns Scotus, and the Franciscan school divided men's minds, and later the influence of Ockham became very widespread.

The success of Thomism was more striking and continuous on the Continent, and particularly in Paris. The opposition of the Bishop of Paris and the condemnation of 1277, which included several of the specifically Thomist theses, can hardly be said to have even delayed the issue. The reputation of St. Thomas was too great to suffer eclipse. The University of Paris regarded him as one of the greatest of its children, other religious orders adopted his teaching as their own, and finally his canonisation in 1324 set the seal of orthodoxy upon his writings. His fame now was universal, not only in the schools of philosophy but wherever learning was held in high honour. The proof is that the greatest poet of the Middle Ages enshrined that philosophy in verse. Never has other philosopher had such good fortune or been made so sure of immortality. Dante did not by any means like all the heroes of the age, but there is no doubt of his admiration for St. Thomas. True, there is the mysterious reference to Siger, "the immortal light, who when lecturing in the street of Straw, drew true conclusions which brought odium upon him," but it is Thomas of Aquino who is the spokesman of the theologians, those burning lights revolving round Beatrice and himself, "like the stars in the neighbourhood of the steadfast poles," and the panegyrist of Francis of Assisi.

The acknowledged greatness of St. Thomas did not, however, bring unity into the Scholastic philosophy of the succeeding centuries. The Franciscan school continued to flourish; the Averrhoists were not silenced, and new systems were invented. The admirers of Thomism look upon the period succeeding the death of St. Thomas as one of decline, and it is hard to resist the impression. Certainly, within a century there is no mistaking the

exhaustion, which as always manifested itself in over-attention to detail, a growing scepticism and a reflective mood, suited better to subtleties than to massive construction. Whether Duns Scotus is to be considered the first and greatest of the decadents or at the meridian of medieval Scholasticism must remain at present, and perhaps for ever, a matter of opinion. The definitive Commentary is being prepared at Quarachi and we must wait on its publication. The latest studies of his writings tend to reduce the divergence of the Scotist philosophy from Thomism. There is no mistaking, however, in the body of writings which goes under his name, the intention to criticise many of the main theses of St. Thomas. He is more sceptical and fastens on the weak points, apparent or real, of his predecessor. An alternative explanation is offered of the principle of individuation; the mind has a distinct, if confused, intuition of the particular; the will is superior to the intellect, and the intellect is incapable of demonstrating with absolute certainty the immortality of the soul. He deals severely, too, with the Thomist proofs of the existence of God, and while going further than St. Thomas in his admission that the concept of being is univocal, he denies the power of the mind to make more than a few intelligible statements about the nature of God.

After the death of Duns Scotus in 1308 comes the age of small men, and an essentially metaphysical system, like that of Thomism, may receive lip-service but never appreciation from such a brood. There are indeed exceptions, and strangely enough it is amongst the mystics, such as Ruysbroeck, Master Eckhart, and Tauler and Suso of his own Order, that the cold intellectualism of St. Thomas proves a word of life. Their thought is erratic at times, and was caricatured, as always, by the parasites of mysticism, but the substance of their ideas betrays unmistakably the influence of St. Thomas. This mystical

movement, however, stands in vivid contrast with the general tendencies in philosophy. The sturdy optimism of the thirteenth century, with its ardour of exploration into the nature of God's universe, gave way to a Nominalism and a closing down of the shutters on life. Ockham, though he escapes the reproach of Nominalism himself, was greatly responsible for the prevalence of a low-grade philosophy and for the identification of medieval thought with its last manifestations.

The result was a very widespread ignorance of the principles of Thomism at the Renaissance, and owing to that ignorance came the unfortunate philosophical division of Europe into two camps. Luther had been educated in the Nominalist schools, and it is clear from his language that he knew next to nothing about St. Thomas.[1] He put Ockham, little as he admired him ("happy are you in not having to learn the dung which was offered me") far above St. Thomas and his followers, men of a "stupid audacity and thickheadedness." Once, while at dinner at Leipzig he began to argue that neither Thomas nor all the Thomists put together had understood a single chapter of Aristotle. A Dominican happened to be at the door listening to the argument, and when he heard St. Thomas being abused he was so irritated that he had hard work to prevent himself from walking up to Luther and spitting in his face.

The Catholic revival came too late to prevent these misunderstandings, and besides it needed something more than philosophy to end the growing discord. Although, as I have said, Nominalism was the current teaching and the level of philosophic thinking low, Thomism persisted and had at least two eminent defenders. At the end of the

[1] "It appears that Luther was little acquainted with the Scholastics of the Middle Ages, especially with Thomas of Aquin—which was the case equally with nearly all his contemporaries—and that he drew his information from secondary sources," *etc.* W. Friedensburg, *Fortschritte in Kenntnis der Reformationsgeschichte*, p. 17. Quoted by H. Grisar, *Luther*, Vol. I, p. 244.

fourteenth century John Capreolus had stood out, and at the close of the fifteenth we meet the names of Sylvester of Ferrara[1] and the illustrious Cajetan. The latter is, with the possible exception of John of St. Thomas, the most sympathetic and illuminating of the many commentators on St. Thomas. To this day he remains the wisest of companions in the study of the *Summa Theologica*, and we have no clearer evidence of the way the winds of thought were blowing in his day than the failure of his thought to make itself properly known in the north of Europe. In the south he heralds a new dawn of Thomism, though for reasons which need not here be explored the day proved somewhat disappointing. The period that followed the Council of Trent has been called the silver age of Scholasticism. That Council gave a new impetus to theological study, and the fact that in the Council the *Summa Theologica* was taken as textbook and book of reference, helped to confirm the unique position it already occupied. It took some time, however, for the Catholic theologians to separate the wheat from the chaff in his system. So many of them had been tied to the letter of his writings and had accepted the authority of Aristotle as potent in all matters—ignoring in this, be it said, the example of their master, St. Thomas, who, as has been seen, kept his independence. The case of Galileo taught them a severe lesson. The result was that the pendulum swung the other way, and the silver age became conspicuous for much original speculation. This does not concern us except in so far as it is connected with the history of Thomist thought. The wish of the Church and tradition made the *Summa* the springboard for all subsequent personal and original statement. This had its disadvantages as well as advantages. The meaning of St. Thomas

[1] Sylvester (Franciscus de Sylvestris Ferranensis), 1474–1526, wrote a Commentary on the *Summa Contra Gentiles*. It is reproduced in the Leonine Edition.

was twisted, and he was made responsible for many views he had never entertained. Moreover, combatants lost sight of the unity in the system and changed bits without noticing that they had brought down the whole structure in the change. On the other hand the intense interest aroused, and the heated controversies connected with grace and foreknowledge and God's causality, made an acquaintance with St. Thomas a *sine qua non* for any professor of theology.

Of the two chief schools of the period, the Dominican stood for the pure and traditional, the Jesuit for a freer and, as it thought, more human interpretation. No general description, however, can do justice to the shades of difference within the two Orders, and in the passing of time some of the distinctions of the seventeenth century have ceased to be applicable. Whatever the merits of both sides, then, in their controversies, there can be no doubt of the genius of many of the protagonists. Francis of Vittoria, Soto, Melchior Cano, Bañes, and particularly John of St. Thomas among the Dominicans, and Gregory of Valencia, Toletus, Vasquez, Bellarmine, Lessius and Suarez among the Jesuits. In the two lists the names of John of St. Thomas and Suarez stand out, the first as the greatest commentator, with Cajetan, of Thomism; the second as the author of a system based on similar principles to those of St. Thomas and almost rivalling it in the favour of Catholic philosophers. This revival did not last as long as might have been expected. The reasons probably are that it was centred in Spain and followed the changing fortunes of that country, and secondly, that as its main interests were theological, it did not take sufficient account of the movement of ideas in science and natural philosophy in the rest of Europe. The same stupid clinging to effete Aristotelian theses is to be observed at Paris in the seventeenth century, and merited the satire of Molière and Boileau. Such conservatism had no chance when men's

ears were ringing with the discoveries of a Newton, and a Descartes and a Leibniz were fascinating the learned world with their attempts to reconcile the old with the new. By the nineteenth century St. Thomas was once more the shade of a great name, revered in Catholic Europe but studied by men only half awake.[1]

Were there space it would be interesting to trace the movement of thought in the nineteenth century which permitted the last modern revival of Thomism. The change in the conception of progress, clearer ideas of the relative provinces of science and philosophy, and the experience both of idealist and empirical philosophies, rendered minds more tolerant of a philosophy with a long past. Within the Catholic body philosophers had experimented with Cartesianism and Ontologism or tried a way out from the difficulties of the time by Fideism. None of these attempts proved successful, and the old crept into favour again. In the van of the movement came Liberatore and Sanseverino. The latter had started life as a Cartesian, and Liberatore cannot be regarded as fully Scholastic save in his later works, *Della Conoscenza Intellettuale* and *Dell' Uomo*. More influential perhaps than either of these were Stöckl, the author of *Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters*, and Kleutgen, the writer of an excellent exposition of Scholastic thought, *Philosophie der Vorzeit*.

[1] *V.* the preface to the new French translation and text edited under the auspices of the *Revue des Jeunes*: "Le temps n'est plus où Victor Cousin se félicitait d'avoir découvert sur les quais de la Seine, dans la boîte d'un bouquiniste, les ouvrages d'un 'certain Aquinate' qui, à son grand étonnement, ne manquait pas d'originalité, ni de profondeur. Aujourd'hui, en pleine Sorbonne, Saint Thomas d'Aquin a un interprète officiel, M. Etienne Gilson, qui, de son propre aveu, a appliqué à Saint Thomas, pour son instruction personnelle, les méthodes qu'on lui avait enseignées à la Sorbonne pour l'étude de Descartes et des autres philosophes, et s'en est bien trouvé; 'Cette étude,' nous confie-t-il, 'fut pour moi une révélation, et je ne pense pas qu'il me soit jamais possible désormais d'abandonner l'étude du penseur le plus lucide et de la doctrine la plus merveilleusement organisée qu'il m'ait jamais été donné de rencontrer.'"

It was the action of the Papacy, however, which proved decisive. Pius IX, in many public utterances, expressed the need of a return to St. Thomas and the main Scholastic tradition, and in 1879 Leo XIII in his *Æterni Patris* stated his wishes in still more definite form. The task that professional Catholic teachers were to take up was *vetera novis augere*, and the foundations for the new were to be taken from St. Thomas. The Pope himself set the example by founding the Roman Academy of St. Thomas, which for many years published its discussions in a periodical. At his instigation the Dominican Order undertook a new edition of the works of the saint, and, lastly, to him is due the school of Thomism at Louvain, which proved so successful under the headship of Monsignor, afterwards Cardinal, Mercier. His successor, Pius X, carried on the same policy. Alarmed by the inroads of Modernism, he had twenty-four theses drawn up to represent the genuine doctrine of St. Thomas, and after his death these theses became the norm for the teaching of philosophy in the Catholic seminaries. Hence it is that Thomism has a host of exponents in every part of the world, and that never has it been so flourishing since the death of its founder.

§ 2. INFLUENCE OF ST. THOMAS

Within the Catholic Church St. Thomas has had a greater influence than any other philosopher and theologian, with the possible exception of St. Augustine; outside, no philosopher of the first rank has been so neglected. Historical and religious reasons account for this. The Reformation stirred up violent hatreds. Although Lutheranism was not an intellectual movement, part of Luther's intention was to free religion from the cords of rationalism with which, as he thought, it had

been strangled. Now St. Thomas was identified with the Catholic position. Being a theologian as well as a philosopher, it was too much to expect that controversialists would keep the two separate. He does not do so himself in his writings, and undoubtedly this mingling of religion with pure thought has proved a stumbling-block to many who have no religious prejudice against him. When, then, after the Reformation, the Catholic and the scientific worlds looked askance at each other and went their different paths, the philosophy of St. Thomas came to be treated as the *Times Literary Supplement* treats a religious tract; that is, it was put under a special heading with the briefest statement of its contents.

Another reason which affected those who stood outside the controversies of the age was the exaggerated cult carried on by the devotees of St. Thomas. To this day this habit does harm. To be told that there is no prophet like Mohammed and no truth outside St. Thomas only serves to alienate the willing or enforced listener. The opponents of the new in the sixteenth century were even more foolish. They would not allow that Aristotle could have erred on any single point. The only result was to bring ridicule on themselves and on much else that by no means deserved contempt. Few among the lovers of the new learning imitated the example of Erasmus and excepted Aquinas from their censure of the Scholastics. The majority were of the mind of Bacon, tired of the excessive dogmatism of men who could do nothing but spin cobwebs out of their own bowels. The change occurred more violently in some places than in others. The tradition of medieval thought and culture lingered on, for instance, in Oxford, and, may be, has never died, and it can be felt in the language of many of the divines and scholars of the seventeenth century. But this tradition was seldom, if ever, renovated by an adequate knowledge of the writings of St. Thomas. It is true that on the shelves in old libraries, amongst the

immense and numerous tomes of theology, often enough the works of St. Thomas could be found, but they were taken down most likely for controversial purposes, and the clue to the right interpretation was missing. Descartes, we know, was brought up in a Jesuit college and knew the Scholasticism of the day, and the omnivorous Leibniz read widely in the writings of St. Thomas, but the Scholasticism was Nominalist and Leibniz was too preoccupied with his own problems to catch the native sense of what he was reading.

The impression remained too strong to be ousted that the Medievals had erected a metaphysical structure in the air. If the Nominalism which was assumed to be the chief medieval system had really been the teaching of St. Thomas, this belief would have been well founded. As we have seen this was not the case, and it is not too much to say that this error was amongst the principal causes of the severance between Catholic and modern philosophy for three centuries. In an earlier chapter much emphasis was laid on the distinction made by St. Thomas between the concept as representative and as significant. This distinction disappeared in the Nominalist theory. As a consequence the basis of the Thomist view, namely, that the mind apprehended being by means of the concept, was forgotten. The mind was now cut off from reality ; ideas came to be regarded as little more than elaborations or superior replicas of sensible impressions or images, and the problem of knowledge came to be stated in the form : How can the mind make a re-entry into the world of objects from the world of ideas to which it is confined ? That is, the fundamental distinction between the intellect and the sense, and the world of *noeta* and *aistheta* was inadvertently abandoned, and ideas shrank into representations of physical objects. Whereas St. Thomas had relied on two coefficients, the phantasm and the active intellect, and made of the concept a medium *quo* or *in quo* the real object

was apprehended, the successors of the Nominalists turned the concept into a *medium quod* and limited its significance to its power to represent the world of phenomena. One has only to turn to Descartes and observe his use of the word idea to be convinced of the influence of the debased Scholastic teaching on his thought and on the very setting of his problems. More obviously still can the change from St. Thomas be marked in Locke. Once the meaning of idea had taken on this new guise, it was almost inevitable that either the idea would become nothing but the passive counterpart of physical impressions, or else, scandalised by such a depreciation of the coinage, philosophers would make the idea wholly active and so creative of the content of experience and of everything.

This habit of mind might not have had such a long reign had it not been that the scientific methods coming into vogue seemed both to confirm it and to rely upon its truth.[1] If the representative character of the idea is the measure of the real, then we can consign metaphysics to the lumber-room and assume that the picture of real objects, as extended and numerable, covers their entire nature. There is no need to talk of substances and essences ; there is nothing more than can be discovered by observation and experiment conducted by the physico-mathematical sciences. The Thomist, on the other hand, is convinced that the mind cannot dispense with metaphysics, that the first principles are in evidence even in the scientific methods, and that phenomena are the appearances of beings which are the object not of the sense but of the intellect. Human knowledge is the result of body and mind combined. The proper and proportionate object of the human understanding is, as St. Thomas continually repeats, sensible reality, and therefore it is natural for man to treat every

[1] Leibniz, *Nouv. Essais*, III, c. iii, 6, and in *Nizol.*, preface, t. iv: "The Nominalist sect is the most profound of the Scholastic sects, and the one most in accord with the changed philosophical method of our day."

real object *as if* it were sensible. Now quantity is the first attribute of what is material and sensible. To treat it as such is a means of arriving at its nature. The immaterial object, on the other hand, is not amenable to measurement; nevertheless, owing to our composite nature, we cannot help representing it as measurable, and in our apprehension of it we have to correct the representation by the significance of it and explore its nature by help of the analogy which runs through being. In the Thomist view, then, the mathematical methods are the principal way the human mind has of advancing in its knowledge of physical reality, for the reason that the human mind is not disembodied but works in conjunction with the body. But it is the mind which is at work, and therefore it is all the while apprehending, not phenomena but being, and metaphysics is both possible and necessary.

Such being the two attitudes, it is not surprising that they had little intercourse. What was known of Thomism did not encourage the modern philosophers, trained on other lines, to consult it. It looked to them like a mountain of metaphysics without vegetation. The Thomist, on his side, tended to look upon the current speculations as philosophically worthless. Fortunately, at the end of the nineteenth century, events brought them nearer. The problem of the right relation between science and philosophy reached a new stage. Meantime the modern Thomist has set about the task, long overdue, of developing his philosophy in the light of contemporary science, æsthetics and history. The result has been that Thomism has in the general estimation been judged fit to rank with those great systems of philosophy which keep their power of inspiration despite the ravages of time.

Within the Catholic Church St. Thomas has always occupied a unique position. He is its most representative theologian, and though the Church can never commit itself to any purely philosophic system, it has always

favoured his as the most suitable framework in which to set forth revealed truth. It is not the place here to discuss the effect of this upon Catholic dogmatic teaching, but looked at from a historical point of view one can see that European culture and religion benefited in many ways by this alliance. The Græco-Roman modes of thought became more intimately incorporated into the Christian culture and insured a stability within change. Again, the intellectual standpoint so dominant in Thomism educated men's minds to a sense of order, and disciplined the political and social as well as the religious ideas of Europe. It proved, as M. Benda would say, a barrier against barbarism. Not only that, the majestic vision described by St. Thomas, with its ladder of perfection stretching from the lowest to the transcendent being of God, a vision not made with a poet's fancy but dictated by reason and completed by faith, took away for ever the right of critics to dismiss Christianity as irrational or insufficient. Indeed, now the very weapon which St. Thomas used has been turned against him, and the charge is made that he did a disservice to Christianity by attempting to ally what is essentially a religious experience with an intellectual expression of it, based, moreover, on an irreligious philosophy such as that of Aristotle. Rightly or wrongly, St. Thomas never countenanced this division between experience and thought. As we shall see, he distinguished faith from reason, but within the domain of natural knowledge it is to the intellect always that he turns as the one safe and sure judge of truth. His cry is, no matter with what experience he is dealing, "when anyone speaks the truth, he is invincible, whosoever it be with whom he is disputing."[1] This belief in and adherence to reason, even when discussing religious matters, offers food for reflection when we remember that St. Thomas was a saint and, most likely, at least as well acquainted with religious experience

[1] In *Job*, c. 13, Lect. 2.

as his critics. Add to that that many of the mystics were of his school and way of thinking, and it would seem that philosophy and religious experience are not incompatible. In fact, as Von Hügel pointed out, a zone of cold clear thinking is required for the complete religious life. Religion, because of its high potentialities, needs strong control, as the history of sects only too clearly proves, and we may say that the varieties of religious experience would have been far less edifying had it not been for the steadying and redeeming influence of Thomism.

Though adamant in his claims for the rights of reason in all natural experience, St. Thomas distinguishes between reason and faith. The distinction, however, presupposes the fact of the supernatural and the truth of Christianity, and so does not directly concern us. The distinction which St. Thomas discusses must not, therefore, be confused with that between reason and belief. From the earliest times the Christian writers had taught that the content of their faith consisted of a number of truths revealed by God through Christ containing mysteries of a supernatural order above human reason. The question was bound, then, to present itself; what was the relation of these truths to those within the compass of natural reason, and what was the nature of the act of faith in them? An answer can be found in embryo in the writings of the Fathers, and more explicitly in the great Scholastics, such as St. Anselm and the Victorines, who preceded St. Thomas. St. Thomas is, therefore, not the originator of the distinction; his merit is that he defined it exactly. The terms of his settlement became a kind of Magna Charta or permanent treaty.

The need and importance of finding terms of agreement between religion and philosophy do not require explanation. Philosophy has two neighbours, science and religion. With both, laws of private property and trespass have to be drawn up. Following Aristotle, St. Thomas treated

science and philosophy in one, and though the principles for a division can be discovered in his works, we have to wait several centuries for the division to become final and operative. When made, it proved a landmark in the history of thought. In the thirteenth century minds were focused more on religion, and the distinction of it from philosophy must also be regarded as a landmark. Philosophy discovers its freedom without lessening the authority of religion. There is, says St. Thomas, a twofold way of knowing God. One is human knowledge, which is limited by the finite power of our nature or being. "The human understanding cannot go so far of its natural power as to grasp his (God's) substance, since under the conditions of the present life the knowledge of our understanding commences with sense; and therefore objects beyond sense cannot be grasped by human understanding except in so far as knowledge is gathered of them through the senses. But things of sense cannot lead our understanding to read in them the essence of the divine substance, inasmuch as they are effects inadequate to the power that caused them."[1] God alone comprehends himself, and there would be no distinction between the infinite perfection of God and our own nature if we could do so. Hence there are truths about God which fall within the range of the human intellect, but they do not exhaust God, and it remains possible that he should reveal other truths above reason. St. Thomas then goes on to suggest that it is likely that God would reveal even natural truths, because the cares of life prevent the majority of people from occupying themselves in philosophy. Supernatural truths, on the other hand, are not required unless God has designed an end for man beyond that of his dreams and conceiving. In matter of fact, the Christian religion was instituted for precisely such a supernatural end. He adds one other reason worth recording: "the repression

[1] *Contra Gent.*, I, 3.

of presumption, which is the mother of error. For there are some so presumptuous of their own genius as to think that they can measure with their understanding the whole nature of the Godhead, thinking that to be true which seems true to them, and that to be false which does not seem true to them."

The fact that the objects of faith are above reason does not render them irrational. St. Thomas is very emphatic on this point, as, owing to the spread of Averrhoism, a doctrine called that of double truth, according to which statements could be true in reason and false in faith, and *vice versa*, had gained supporters. First, the claims of Christianity rest on evidence. This evidence is sufficient to show the credibility of the Christian religion. As an example in point St. Thomas could have appealed to his *Summa Contra Gentiles*, written as a help for missionaries and to assist in the conversion of the Moslems. The authority of the Christian religion having been shown to be credible on reasonable grounds, the truths declared by that authority cannot be irrational. There cannot therefore be any conflict between the truths revealed by God and the truths discovered by natural reason. The ultimate source of both is God. The conclusion which St. Thomas draws is not, as some might expect, obscurantist, but the very opposite, namely, that religion has nothing to fear from philosophy. Philosophy arrives at truth, as religion reveals truth ; therefore it can be trusted. There is no need for the Christian philosopher to start with religious presuppositions or prejudices or with a view to propaganda. The aim of philosophy is truth and all things sing together with it.

When we turn to the second way of knowledge, that by faith in revealed truth, we find St. Thomas harnessing reason in its service, but never asking it to provide demonstration of dogma on natural principles. It offers analogies of the mysteries of faith, it shows that they

cannot be proved to be against reason and it systematises them so far as that is possible. Reason, then, is a kind of bodyguard, and is used also as an instrument in the development of doctrine; it may again be said to have the function, in conjunction with moral conduct, of dusting the soul so that the truth of the supernatural order and calling may be seen. When, for instance, faith supervenes, the former unbeliever has usually been prepared by reason, but he now has intellectual certainty which is not dependent for its strength on the reasons which preceded his assent. His faith in revealed doctrine rests solely on divine authority.

This solution may seem to cause as many difficulties as it solves, because either the assent to divine authority appears, in the last resort, to rest on the grounds of credibility—and then faith remains natural—or the assent appears from nowhere, like some Jack-in-the-Box. The answer which St. Thomas gives to this difficulty has to be put together from various passages where he is writing of the analysis of faith. The difficulty does not seem to have struck him as a serious one because he holds that it is in the act of faith itself that one sees both that one *ought* to assent and that it is rational to do so, just as we may suppose that Bassanio, though drawn in uncertainty at first to all three caskets, saw, after having made the choice, how wise he had been, and how many pieces of evidence there had been if he had only noticed them. The illustration fails because in faith the mind is illuminated and directed by the will to see and choose the path to supernatural life. St. Thomas defines faith as an act of the intellect determined by order of the will. In all natural acts, he says, whenever the mind is influenced by the will there is only opinion or probability, not certainty. It is a question of taste or surroundings or prejudice, of a point of view. Alone in the supernatural act of faith is the intellect without vision of a necessitating

object and yet certain, and the reason is that it is made aware not of its own point of view but of God's point of view and his demands. The will does not, in this case, make us more eccentric, but draws us to the centre. The manner of life proposed is not any manner of life, but life itself, and the vision promised is truth itself. *Gratia nihil est aliud quam quædam inchoatio gloriæ in nobis.* The difficulty therefore does not exist for St. Thomas, because in his view the man of faith sees all with the eyes of faith in a new perspective, in a supernatural finality which floods the world and makes it abundantly clear to him what he ought to do if "he would gain eternal life."

§ 3. MODERN THOMISM

The revival of Thomism mentioned earlier on has received the name of Neo-Thomism. It differs no whit in its general principles from the teaching of St. Thomas. But as it is obvious that a system conceived in the thirteenth century cannot be in all respects abreast of modern times, the main object of the modern Thomist is to bring it up to date by eliminating the ephemeral, strengthening what appears to be weak, and developing those ideas of his doctrine which were disregarded by him and have since assumed importance. Fortunately a number of scholars saw that this task could not be carried out successfully without a knowledge of the period and a critical study of the manuscripts and sources of St. Thomas. There is still no altogether satisfactory completed edition. The two best known are the Parma and Paris *Vives*; a third, which is in process of completion, is being edited by the Dominican Fathers, and is called the *Leonine*, as it owes its origin to the efforts of Pope Leo XIII. An immense amount of material relating to

the sources and the period has been gathered by the industry of a large number of scholars, such as Hefele, Ehrle, Denifle, Mandonnet, de Wulf, Gilson, Grabmann and others. In Mandonnet's *Siger de Brabant*, an admirable picture of the Paris of St. Thomas is given and of the conflicting parties and theories. M. Gilson has written a short and scholarly history of the period, and de Wulf has treated the same subject at greater length. Dr. Grabmann has covered the same ground, and by ransacking the libraries of Europe has been able to add to our knowledge of contemporary writers who formerly had been but names The results of these modern researches are collected in the *Bibliographie Thomiste* by Mandonnet and Destrez, and in the *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques*.

The portions of the writings of St. Thomas which modern Thomists have given up with a good grace are for the most part the scientific theories of his age, the astronomical beliefs, the theory of the four elements, of the influence of the air and the sun, of motion, the physical and chemical and biological conceptions which entered into his philosophy of substance and change, whether of form or accident. These theories are imbedded in the philosophy and it is not always an easy task to root them out. On the whole the work has been successfully accomplished, and there can be no doubt that St. Thomas would have approved of it. He distinguished clearly in his own mind the provinces of physics and metaphysics, and of the possibly passing value of the former. Progress was for him a live concept. " It is natural for the human reason to move step by step from the imperfect to the perfect," and there is no other passage so full of a restrained passion as that in which he denounced the reactionaries of his day, *Numquid dormitavit doctrina Christiana* (" Are we to think that the Christian doctrine has been asleep from the time of those learned doctors, Athanasius, Basil, Ambrose,

Augustine and others? . . ."). The difficulty, then, is not so much in removing the bad science from St. Thomas as in replacing it by the new. It has to be shown that the metaphysical principles, the doctrines of act and potency and form and matter are compatible with the facts of nature which have since been discovered. *Hoc opus, hic labor est.* The institute at Louvain has directed its efforts mainly to this task. If those efforts have not been rewarded with complete and universally acknowledged success, the reason may be that it is impossible for any philosophy to hope to keep on good terms with every current scientific hypothesis. The most it can do is to hold to principles which are sufficiently flexible to be capable of adjustment to the general trend of scientific theory, and for the rest to be ready to learn where true information is available. This spirit has been evident at Louvain in the Cosmology of Professor Nys and the laboratory work of Thiéry and Michotte and the writings of the late Cardinal Mercier. The latter stated quite clearly in his *Logique* the meaning which he attached to the word Thomist, as applied to himself. "Although we affix to our programme the name of St. Thomas, we regard the Thomist philosophy neither as an ideal which we are forbidden to surpass nor as a barrier setting limits to the activity of thought; but we believe after examination that there is wisdom as well as modesty in taking it at least as a starting-point and as a basis. Let this be said in reply to those amongst our foes and friends who think it interesting at times to ask us if we are dreaming of putting the human mind back in the Middle Ages or identifying philosophy itself with the thought of one philosopher alone. Clearly not! We have no intention of putting thought back several centuries; have we not heard Leo XIII, that active restorer of the philosophy of the School, recommend to the sympathy of all the discoveries and theories of modern men: '*edicimus libenti gratoque animo recipiendum esse quicquid sapienter*

dictum, quicquid utiliter fuerit a quopiam inventum atque excogitatum'?"

This candid profession would not win unqualified support from all modern Thomists. Besides Louvain there are many other centres and each has its special spirit. The Angelico in Rome, for instance, has more respect for the *ipse dixit* of St. Thomas than Louvain or Milan; the views taught by Thomists at the Gregorian University would not always prove acceptable at the University of Fribourg. There is a left wing and a right wing of Thomism, there are conservatives and liberals. For this reason one will find no agreement about what are the philosophical weaknesses in St. Thomas which need to be remedied. One school holds that the theory of individuation cannot be maintained and that the theory of knowledge must be supplemented by introducing a direct apprehension of the particular, while the more conservative reply that the old theses are both justified and essential to the system. Rightly among the conservatives the Dominican Order stands out. For them St. Thomas is a family treasure and they are reluctant that others, not brought up in their centuries-old tradition of understanding, should lightly try their innovations. Of one mind with them are M. Maritain, who has done so much to make the philosophy of St. Thomas better known, and M. Gilson, who, while standing outside all factions, has striven to give the world an authentic interpretation of St. Thomas, based not on his commentators but on his text.

In speaking, then, of modern Thomism one must be careful not to confuse the various schools, or to assume that certain tendencies which have manifested themselves are accepted as legitimate developments by all. With this caution we may turn and consider what are, in fact, the principal tendencies and how they are related to other and contemporary philosophical movements. The fact that the revival has had its centres in France and Belgium has,

I think, to be taken into account. Now in France a form of Positivism, which sought its inspiration in the concepts of physical science, for a long time held sway. The prophet of revolt was Bergson. He introduced a different language and a different currency in ideas. Biological concepts superseded the mechanical, instinct and experience the former scientific rationalism, and philosophers began to turn to account words like dynamic, pragmatic, emergent, and carried over into their philosophic theories the scientific concept of evolution. The Thomists did not remain unaffected. They were aware that the system of St. Thomas might appear to an unobservant eye far too similar for their liking to the condemned rationalistic systems. It was based on abstraction, it held in high honour the scientific definition, it said little about development and personality; it stood, in fine, for the intellect, and the product of the intellect is dead-sea fruit. Already, before they had looked closely into the situation, the attention of some had been called to a remarkable book by Maurice Blondel, called *L'Action*. That book almost certainly suggested to some the idea of bringing out that side of Thomism which corresponded with *L'Action* and the general trend of philosophy. They were convinced that the principles of St. Thomas permitted it, and, what is more, safeguarded the movement from extravagance and error.

The degree of assent to this suggestion has varied considerably. In some quarters no attention at all was paid to it. In P. Sertillanges the idea is no dull replica, no dead thing, but alive, mounting upward, like the fairy bean-stalk, to the very heavens.

> "For speculation turns not to itself,
> Till it hath travelled and is married there
> Where it may see itself."[1]

[1] *Troilus and Cressida*, Act III, Scene 3; quoted in *Les Grandes Thèses de la Philosophie Thomiste*, p. 13.

P. Rousselot, in his *L'Intellectualisme de St. Thomas*, perhaps the most original work of the Thomist renaissance, goes a stage further. Making much of the distinction between *intellectus* and *ratio*, he declares that St. Thomas is inconsistent with his own dearest principles when advocating the Aristotelian ideal of abstract definition. The truth is that the *ratio* is ever striving to overleap itself into intuition, to behold itself and the face of God. Love, therefore, and thought come very near to each other in reciprocal relationship, and our machinery of concepts is helped along by a certain connaturality with being, a familiarity or at-homeness explicable only by their common source in God. Finally, in P. Maréchal[1] the suggestion is worked out in all its implications. Within the cold clarity of truth he discovers a buried warmth of desire. Truth and goodness are one finally, and judgment and love belong to the same movement towards them. P. Maréchal therefore gets, so to speak, inside thought and gives us a kind of metaphysical psychology. In doing so, if he be right, he has supplied modern Thomism with what it needed, namely, an analysis of love and desire and personality.

But the question remains whether P. Maréchal and the others are justified in calling their view Thomist. M. Maritain and others do not think so. Whichever be right, it is to be hoped that both the school which is adventurous and that to which P. Garrigou-Lagrange and M. Maritain belong will continue to flourish. Both are adding to our knowledge, the first by the means already explained, the second by the firmness with which they transmit the intellectualism of St. Thomas. There is no shadow of compromise in their theory of knowledge, and they have

[1] J. Maréchal, *Le Point de Départ de la Métaphysique*, in five volumes. This immense work is not yet completed. The third volume is consecrated to Kant and the fifth to St. Thomas. This latter volume is a *tour de force*. Thomism is reset in Kantian language.

succeeded in showing how closely knit and impressive is the metaphysical system. It may be that they have their eyes fixed on the Aristotelian elements in St. Thomas, while the others have detected a larger dose of Platonic and Augustinian thought than has so far been supposed. M. Durantel[1] tried to prove that St. Thomas was more Platonic than Aristotelian. All scholars must agree that this is an exaggeration, but the extent of St. Thomas' debt to other sources than Aristotle must still remain *sub judice*.

The vigour of the modern Thomist movement promises well for its future, and the spirit of the age seems to be favourable to it. Whether we turn to the political world or the world of art and literature, we witness the same phenomenon. *L'Action Française* and the political systems in Spain and Italy stand for the intellect as against sentiment. Form and order are to have precedence over, or at any rate direct, the general will. In art impressionism has yielded to a movement in favour of pure form, the desire to create in terms of sense a cosmos analogous to that of the intelligible world. How near this is to Thomist principles M. Maritain has shown in his work, *Art et Scholastique*.[2] Even in science there are signs that any metaphysic based on rational principles and capable of world-wide application will receive respectful attention.[3]

In fact, wherever we look we can find points of contact between Thomism and modern problems of religion, art

[1] *Le Retour à Dieu par l'Intelligence et la Volonté dans la Philosophie de St. Thomas.* Paris, Alcan, 1918.

[2] Cf. also the essays by Mr. Eric Gill, *Art Nonsense* (Cassells, 1929), and for literary criticism Mr. Wyndham Lewis, *Time and Western Man*, and for further confirmation on the tendencies in art, Willenski, *The Principles of Modern Art*.

[3] Cf. Prof. Whitehead's *Science and the Modern World* and *Religion in the Making*. It is interesting to make a comparison of his principle of creativity with the prime matter of St. Thomas, and of their respective conceptions of God as source of possibilities and end of the world, and of many other analogous notions; the point being, not that they are in accord, but that they are engaged in the same kind of pursuit and have enough in common to differ intelligibly from one another.

and philosophy. As P. Rousselot has suggested, the reaction of Bergson and others against the too, too solid concepts of mechanical science has its echo in the thought of St. Thomas. Only he returns not to instinct or factors outside his mind, but looks from reason to intellect or intuition, to the ideal of knowledge. The mind is no base or useless servant, even in religious experience. In the end thought or idea and spiritual personality come together in Thomism. " It is precisely the fundamental principle of his intellectualist metaphysic that every spiritual Person is an idea, that there is perfect identity between Idea and spiritual Reality. ' Intelligent in act ' and ' intelligible in act ' are for him two convertible notions." The same ideal of knowledge makes a comparison between his own position and that of Gentile, for example, both easy and necessary. To the latter, thought is act, and also " becoming." To St. Thomas the ideal of mind is fulfilled in pure Act, but human beings are not God, and one sign is precisely the " becoming " which belongs to their nature ; they aspire to act and have to be contented with judgments in which subject and object are not wholly identical.

In what concerns, too, the relation of mind and body, of scientific and mathematical thinking to knowledge of natures or essences, the universal and the particular, subject and attributes, the whole and the parts or members of the universe—all burning questions of the day—St. Thomas has much to say that is apposite. The modern Thomist has, therefore, a fair field in which to win his spurs. There are, indeed, many other currents of thought antagonistic to him, but even supposing that they ran favourably, he would still be foolish to rely on circumstances. His one sure talisman is truth.

SUMMARY OF LIFE OF ST. THOMAS[1]

1225	Birth at Roccasecca. Probably at beginning of the year.
1230	Oblate at Monte Cassino.
1239	Returns to his family. (Frederick II, at war with Pope, expels monks of Monte Cassino.)
1239	Autumn. Student at Faculty of Arts at Naples.
1244	Takes Dominican habit at Naples. Leaves for Paris. Taken prisoner during the journey by his brothers.
1245	Autumn. Freed from imprisonment. Goes to Paris to study under Albertus Magnus.
1248	Summer. Goes to Cologne to newly opened Studium Generale O.P. Remains there till 1252.
1252	During Summer Vacation returns to study in Paris.
1254	Licentiate at Paris.
1256–59	Professor of Theology at Paris.
1259–61	Professor of Theology at Anagni, where *curia pontificalis* resides (Alexander II).
1261–65	Professor of Theology at Orvieto, where *curia pontificalis* resides (Urban IV).
1265–67	Professor of Theology at Rome at O.P. Convent of St. Sabina.
1267–November 1268.	Professor of Theology at Viterbo, where *curia* of Clement IV.
1268	November. Hurriedly recalled to Paris. Arrives in January 1269.
1269–Easter 1272.	Professor at Paris.
1272	After Easter leaves for Italy, and present at General O.P. Chapter at Florence at Pentecost.
1272–73	Professor at Naples.
1274	January. By order of Gregory X leaves for Council of Lyons. Falls ill at Fossanuova. Dies 7th March.

[1] These dates are taken from P. Mandonnet's article in *Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques.* Jan.-Apr., 1920.

WORKS OF ST. THOMAS[1]

I. Ordinary Lectures—

The Commentary on the Sentences. 1254–56.
Commentaries on the Evangelists, Isaias, Job, etc., St. Paul.

II. *Quæstiones Disputatæ*—

Scl. Periodical Scholarly Exercises. Generally some disputed question or "article."

Q. de Veritate. 1256–59.
Q. de Potentia. 1259–63.
Q. de Malo. 1263–68.
Unione Verbi Incarnata. 1268.
Spiritualibus Creaturis. 1269.
Q. de Anima. 1269–70.
Q. de Virtutibus. 1270–72.

III. *Disputationes Quodlibetanæ*—

Scl. Scholarly Exercises which took place yearly shortly before Christmas and Easter. Most professors only disputed once.

IV. Philosophical Commentaries—

Unfinished Books on Boëthius.
In Dionysium de divinis Nominibus. c. 1261.
Commentaries on Aristotle: *In VIII libros Physicorum, in XII libros Metaphysicorum, in De Anima . . ., in X Ethicorum, etc.* 1265-8-9–1273.

V. Other Principal Works—

De Principiis Naturæ. 1255.
De Ente et Essentia. 1256.
Contra Impugnantes Dei Cultum. 1257.
Contra Gentiles. 1258–60.
Officium Sti Sacramenti. 1264.
In Sententiarum. 1265.
De Regimine Principum. 1245–46.

[1] Only the more important works are here included.

De Occultis Operationibus Naturæ, etc. 1269–72.
De Perfectionibus Vitæ Spiritualis. 1269.
De Unitate Intellectus. 1270.
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INDEX

ABELARD, 14, 20, 21, 26, 27, 29, 60
Absolute, the, 69, 78, 116, 125 *seq.*, 133, 158, 165
Absolutism, 61, 116, 176
Abstraction, three modes of, 191 *seq.*
Accidents, Ch. V § 6, and see Substance.
Act and Potency, Ch. V § 2, and see Potency and Act.
Actio est in passo, 144, 176, 181
Action Française, l', 274
Æterni Patris of Pope Leo XIII, 258
Agnosticism, viii, 67, 78, 129, 131, 134, 168 *seq.*
Aistheton -a, 63, 260
Albert the Great, Ch. II § 1 *passim*, 9, 17-23, 31, 35-6, 44 with note, 51, 191
Albigensian heresy, 4, 7, 31
Alcuin, 19
Alexander of Hales, 18
Alexandria, platonic tradition in, 10, 12
Analogy -ies, Ch. V § 3 *passim*; use of, in medieval Scholasticism, 57; importance of St. Thomas' doctrine of, 66-7, 120; St. Thomas' use of, 63 *seq.*, 67, 109 *seq.*, 125 *seq.*, 134, 167 *seq.*, 177 *seq.*, 187 *seq.*, 217, 262,
Anaxagoras, the *Nous* of, 178
Angels, 16, 50, 55, 93, 113, 116, 149, 162 n., 193, 207, 211, 215, 225, 226
Anselm, St., "The Father of Scholasticism," 13, 17, 52, 60, 79, 158, 264; his ontological argument, 60, 79, 103, 157, 158
Anthropomorphism, 67, 138, 169, 187, 196
Antioch, school of, 9, 18-9
Aquinas, St. Thomas, *passim*; and see Thomism,
Aquinas—*continued*
Works (see pp. 278-9) :—
Catena Aurea, 38, 41
Commentary on Job, 30
Commentary on the De Anima, 201, 204, 219 n., cf. 191, 208.
Commentary on the De Divinis Nominibus (of Dionysius), 140, 141, 168, 169, cf. 125
Commentary on the De Somniis, 204 n.
Commentary on the Physics, 105, 183, 184
Commentary on the Sentences, 27, 37, 183
Compendium Theologiæ, 42, 51, 56, 128 n., 162, 186, 188-9
Contra Impugnantes, 40
Corpus Christi, Office of, 40, 41, 42
De Æternitate contra Murmurantes, 183, 184
De Æternitate Mundi, 47
De Cœlo et Mundo, 23
De Ente et Essentia, 37, 152 n.
De Natura Materiæ, 110, 200
De Perfectione Vitæ Spiritualis, 46
De Potentia, 30, 128 n., 170, 204, 219
De Spiritualibus Creaturis, 196, 220
De Unitate Intellectus contra Averrhoistas, 46
De Veritate, 41, 56, 83, 87 n., 90 n., 99 n., 120, 128, 225, 240
Quæstiones disputatæ, 29
Quæstiones quodlibetales, 29, 46, 47, 147
Summa contra Gentiles, 41, 56, 71, 90 n., 102, 128 n., 142, 146, 152, 154, 166, 167, 168, 172 and note, 175, 179, 181,

Thomas Aquinas—
Summa contra Gentiles—continued
198, 210, 212, 213, 214, 236, 237, 240, 241, 245, 255 n., 265, 266
Summa Theologica, 3, 4, 39, 41, 42, 43, 56, 76, 81, 82, 94, 110, 146, 147, 153, 160, 168, 170, 173, 177, 180, 181, 184, 193, 197, 200, 204, 206, 208, 211, 216-7, 220-1, 223 n., 236, 240, 243, 244, 255.
Arabian Philosophers, viii, 5, 15, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31, 173, 183, and see Averrhoism
Argument from design, 164
Arian heresy, 9, 12
Aristotle, St. Thomas a disciple of, viii and *passim*, but keeps his independence, 255; regarded as the philosopher and logician *par excellence*, 21
Aristotelianism, see Ch. I § 3, 31, 47, 115, 160, 251
Augustine, St., and Platonism, 10-12; and St. Thomas, 17; his ideal of wisdom, 52, of the good, 138; his great influence in the Church, 258
Augustinianism and Platonism, 11, 13; particular doctrines of, 16; in early Church, 19; influence in XIIIth century, 22, 44, 251; points of contact with Thomism, 71, 173, 274; points of conflict with Thomism, 103, 196, 207, 212
Averrhoism at Paris, 4; some of its tenets, 22, 174, 183, 207-8, 266; its tendency to scepticism and fatalism, 22; growth of the heresy, 45; *versus* Thomism, 45-7, 208, 251, 262, 266
Avicenna, 22, 83, 111, 152 n., 162, 281.

Bacon, Roger, 195, 252, 259
Baeumke, ix, 281
Bañes, Dominic, 256
Bangulf, Bishop of Fulda, 25
Barbarossa, Frederick (Frederick I), 3; great-uncle of St. Thomas, 33
Basil, St., 11 n., 12, 269
Beauty, 140 *seq.*
Bede Jarrett, O.P., see Bibliography, 282
Bede, the Venerable, 19
Being, as meaning Reality, 62, 65, 101; knowledge of, 76-9; transcendental notion of, 78; fuller discussion of, Ch. V *passim*
Being, human, one only in union of body and soul, 16, 67, 148, 153, 205 *seq.*
Being, rational, 122
Bellarmine, Robert, 256
Benda, M., 263
Benedictines, 6, 24, 33-5
Bergson, 60, 272, 275
Berkeley, Bishop, viii
Bernard, St., 14, 60
Blanche of Castile, 7
Blondel, Maurice, *L'Action*, 272
Boëthius, 19, 119, 173, 278
Boileau, 256
Bologna, University of, 26
Bonaventure, St., a friend of St. Thomas, 9, 244; his Augustinianism, 15, 45, 196; denounces Aristotelianism, 24; teaching at Paris, 28, 51
Book of the Sentences, of Peter Lombard, 27, 28
Butler, Bishop, viii

Cæsar, 34
Cajetan, 89, 127, 129, 255, 256
Cano, Melchior, 256
Canossa, 6
Capella, Martianus, 19
Capetians, 6
Capreolus, John, 255
Carra de Vaux, *Avicenne*, 281
Cartesianism, 257, and see Descartes
Cassiodorus, 19
Categories of Aristotle, 20, 67, 121, 147, 154, 182
Cathari, 31

Causality, Ch. V § 5, and see Causes
Causality, Divine, and human freedom, 186-9
Causes, explanation by, as used by St. Thomas and other philosophers, 63-4; St. Thomas accepts Aristotelian division into material, formal, efficient and final, 67, 143; definition of, 108; nature of efficient cause, 143 *seq.*
Celestine IV, Pope, 5
Character of St. Thomas sketched, Ch. II § 2
Charlemagne, 19, 24, 25
Charles of Anjou, 6, 47
Chartres, Cathedral school at, 6, 26
Christianity and Platonism, 10-11
Cicero, 34
Cistercian monastery of Fossa Nuova, 48
Clement of Alexandria, 12
Co-efficients of being, 101-2, 107, 144 *seq.*
Coleridge, S. T., 60
Cologne, Cathedral school at, 6; St. Thomas and Albert the Great at, 36
Concepts, Ch. IV § 3
Confessions of St. Augustine, 49, 180
Conrad, 6
Conscience, 70, 229 *seq.*, 239 *seq.*
Continuum, 109-10, 135, 195
Contradiction, principle of, 64, 76-9, 101, 103-5, 143
Creation and conservation, St. Thomas' doctrine of, 180 *seq.*

Damien, St. Peter, 14
Dante, 4, 7, 18, 29, 43, 141, 244, 252
De Broglie, P., 236 n.
De Bruyne, E., *St. Thomas d'Aquin*, ix, 281
De Interpretatione of Aristotle, 20
Demiurge, the, 178
De Monte, Robert, 20
De Munnyck, M. P., ix
Denifle, ix, 269
De Periculis Novissorum Temporum of William of St. Amour, 40
Descartes, viii, 75, 191, 257 and note, 260, 261
Destrez-Mandonnet, *Bibliographie Thomiste*, 269, 282
Descoqs, P., see Bibliography, 281
De Wulf, M., ix, 269, 281
Dionysius (the Pseudo-), 11 n., 12, 23, 125, 138, 140, 169, 206, 237, 278
Dominicans, preach a Crusade, 5; welcomed at Paris by St. Louis IX, 7; St. Thomas joins their Order, 34-5; feud with the seculars, 40, 44; teach the Thomistic doctrine, 251; undertake a new edition of St. Thomas' works, 258
Donne, J., 100
Duhem, P., see Bibliography, 281
Duns Scotus, 9, 15, 155, 252, 253
Durantel, J., *Le Retour à Dieu par l'Intelligence et la Volonté dans la Philosophie de St. Thomas*, 274

Eckhart, Master, 166, 253
Ehrle, Cardinal, 269, 281
Elenchi, of Aristotle, the, 20
End, definition of, 108; necessity of, 145-6, 164, 195, 227 *seq.*, 232 *seq.*
Erasmus, 259
Eriugena, Scotus, 12, 13
Essence and existence, distinction of, 78, 79, 108, 111; identical in God, 165, 167
Eternity of matter, Aristotelian doctrine of, 183
Ethics, Ch. IX
Ethics of Aristotle, 21
Evil, St. Thomas' solution of the problem of, 70, 185; meaning of, 142-3
Evolution, 196 *seq.*, 272

Faith and Reason, viii, 14, 25, 263-8
Faith, the act of, 266-8

Fideism, 257
Form, see Matter and form
Fossanuova, 48
France, Ch. I § 1 *passim*
Francis of Assisi, St., 15, 29, 31, 33, 52, 252
Francis of Vittoria, 256
Franciscans, preach a Crusade, 5; welcomed at Paris by St. Louis IX, 7; their school at Oxford, 17, 18, 252; feud with the seculars, 40, 44; their doctrine of love, 235; philosophic views of, 17, 252
Frederick I, 3, 33
Frederick II, 3-5, 33, 51
Friedensburg, W., 254 n.
Fulk de Deuil, 26

Galen, 18
Galileo, 255
Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le Sens Commun. Dieu, son Existence et sa Nature*, 128, 273, 281
Gemelli, R. P., see Bibliography, 281
Gentile, 109, 275
Gerbert (Pope Sylvester II), 20
Germany, Ch. I § 1 *passim*
Gill, Eric, *Art Nonsense*, 274 n.
Gilson, Etienne, *Le Thomisme, La Philosophie au Moyen Age, La Philosophie de S. Bonaventure*, ix, 15, 257 n., 269, 271, 281
God, St. Thomas' metaphysical conception of, 69-70, 119; the *summum bonum*, 139; identified with pure act, Ch. V *passim*; proof of existence of, Ch. VI *passim*, the five arguments used, 160 *seq.*; nature of, Ch. VI
Good, definition of the, 108, 138, 139, 228 *seq.*; a transcendental mode of being, Ch. V § 4, 145; God the cause of, 170; and see Ethics.
Grabmann, M., ix, 38 n., 269, 281
Grace and Free will, doctrine of, 185 *seq.*; free will discussed, 240-1; controversies about, 256
Gregory IX, Pope, 5
Gregory Nazianzen, St., 12
Gregory of Nyssa, St., 12
Gregory of Valencia, 256
Gregory X, Pope, 40, 48
Grisar, H., *Luther*, 254 n.
Grosseteste, Robert, 22
Guelf and Ghibèlline, 4, 5, 7
Gunzon of Novara, 21

Happiness, 71, 233 *seq.*
Hauréau, J. B., see Bibliography, 282
Hefele, 269
Hegel, viii, 78, 109, 165
Henry of Brabant, 22
Henry the Fowler, 6
Hildebrand, 3
Holy Land, Ch. I § 1 *passim*
Honorius III, Pope, 5, 7
Hugh II, King of Cyprus, 39
Hugh of St. Victor and his school, 17, 50, 264
Hugon, E., see Bibliography, 282
Humanism of St. Thomas, 207 and note
Hylomorphism, 16, 194 *seq.*, c.f. 281
Hypostasis, 122, 211, 219

Idea, St. Thomas' use of the word, 63, 116, 138, 225, 260 *seq.*
Idealism, 61, 75, 124
Ideas, Augustinian theory of, 173
Identity, principle of, 76-9
Illumination, St. Augustine's doctrine of, 14, 16; depreciated in St. Thomas' system, 31, 70, 220
Immortality of the soul, 55, 148, 150, 212 *seq.*
Individuation, Ch. V § 6, 253, 271
Innocent III, Pope, 5
Innocent IV, Pope, 5, 34
Intellectualism of St. Thomas, viii, 59-61, 63, 172, 177, 243, 253, 263, 272, 273
Intellectus agens, 95, 216, 217 *seq.*, 231
Intelligibile in actu est intellectus in actu, 96, 115, 159, 172-3, 203, 219 *seq.*, 225, 275

Intelligible, the, and the intellect, 79, 81, 90-3, 115, 151, 172 *seq.*, 215 *seq.*, 275
Intuition, 61, 93 *seq.*, 123, 159, 273
Italy, Ch. I § 1 *passim*

James of Venice, 20, 22
Jewish scholars, 5, 21, 30, 69
Joachim, Abbot, prophecies of, 4, 31
John of St. Thomas, 255, 256
John of Salisbury, 20, 21
Judgment, Ch. IV § 3, 220 n.1, 240-1

Kant, 59, 60, 76, 85, 87, 131, 155, 166, 220, 222, 273
Kennedy, D. J., see Bibliography, 282
Kilwardby, 17, 48, 251
Kleutgen, J., 257
Knowledge, the first principles of, Ch. IV; St. Thomas' insistence on the part played by senses in, 16, 158 *seq.* (see also Sense); their relation to the intellect, 79, 204, 216 *seq.*; St. Thomas' scepticism regarding, 56 (see also Scepticism); human contrasted with divine, 58-60; an immanent operation, 90

Lackland, John, 7
Leibniz, viii, 257, 260, 261 n.
Leo XIII, Pope, restores the philosophy of St. Thomas to the schools, 258, 270
Leonine Edition of St. Thomas' Works, 56 n., 253, 255 n., 258, 268
Lessius, Leonard, 256
Liber Sententiarum of Peter Lombard, 21
Liberatore, M., 257
Life, Ch. VIII § 2
Locke, J., 80, 261
Logos, the, 11, 52
Louis VIII, King, 7
Louis IX, St., 3, 7, 8, 29, 39, 40, 52, 244
Louvain, school of Thomism at, 258, 270, 271
Love, its place in Thomist system, 59, 60, 235, 273
Luther, Martin, 254, 258
Lyons, 40, 48

Malebranche, N. de, viii, 15
Man, Ch. VIII; St. Thomas' philosophical and metaphysical conception of, 67-8, 205 *seq.*; confirmed by history and experience, 68-9. See also Being, human
Mandonnet, P., ix, 18, 44, 269, 277, 282
Manfred, 6
Manichean heresy, 10, 39
Maréchal, J., ix, 93 n., 273, 282
Maritain, J., ix, 140 n., 271, 273, 274, 282
Marotta, sister of St. Thomas, 35, 48
Materialism, 61
Matter and form, Chs. IV, V, VI *passim*; and especially, 16, 66, 108, 109, 270
Maur, Raban, 19
Mélanges Thomistes, see Bibliography, 282
Meno of Plato, 19
Mercier, Cardinal, 83, 258, 270
Metalogicus of John of Salisbury, 20
Metaphysics, reason and, 59; subject-matter of, in general, 62-3, 64, 75, 192, in St. Thomas, 65-7; its place in philosophy, 101, 261
Metaphysics of Aristotle, 21, 75, 183, 188
Michotte, 270
Mind, the human, knows itself in judging, Chs. IV, V; infinite in its capacity, 206; works in conjunction with the body, 262
Modernism, 258
Molière, 256
Monism, 67, 100, 111, 113, 131, 134
Montaigne, 60
Monte Cassino, 4, 33, 34

Movement, argument from, a proof of the existence of God, 160, 161, 162 and note, 170 *seq.*; in the Ptolemaic astronomy, 193; in St. Thomas' physics, 193 *seq.*

NAPLES, UNIVERSITY OF, 5, 34, 47
Nature of God, Ch. VI
Nature of man, see Being, human
Nature and man, Ch. VIII
Neckam, Alexander, 21
Neo-Platonism, 10, 18, 19, 125, 129, 162 n., 168, 173, 243
Neo-Thomism, 268 *seq.*
Nestorian heresy, 9
Newton, I., 257
Noel, L., see Bibliography, 282
Noeton -a (thought), 63, 121, 123, 260
Nominalism, 143, 254, 260, 261 and note
Nys, D., 270

OCKHAM, W. OF, 252, 254
Olgiati, F., ix
Olgiati-Zybura, *The Key to the Study of St. Thomas*, quoted 108, 282
Ontological argument of St. Anselm rejected by St. Thomas, 60, 79, 103, 157, 158
Onotologism, 257
Opuscula of St. Bonaventure, 15
Organon of Aristotle, 19, 20, 21, 27
Origen, 12
Originality, St. Thomas' views on, viii; not lacking in his system, 22, 257
Otto III, 20
Oxford, 17, 26, 48, 251, 259

PANTHEISM, 100, 111, 113, 131, 177
Paris, Cathedral school at, 6
Paris, University of, 3, 7, 8, 26-9, 37, 39, 40, 44, 48-9, 252, 256
Parmenides, 79, 109
Peckham, John, 17, 47, 251
Pégues, T., see Bibliography, 282
Peri-Hermeneias, 20, 188
Peter Lombard, 21, 27, 28, 35
Philip Augustus, 7, 27
Philosophical tradition, differences in, 8 *seq.*
Philosophy of St. Thomas, see Thomism
Philosophy, subject-matter of, 58
Physical Predetermination, 187 *seq.*
Physics, subject-matter of, 191 *seq.*
Physics of Aristotle, 21, 191
Pius IX, Pope, 258
Pius X, Pope, 258
Plato, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 52, 57, 138, 163, 178, 208, 211, 223
Platonism, influence on Christian philosophy, 10 *seq.*, 207
Plotinus, 10, 52, 109, 207
Pluralism, 67
Porphyry, 12, 19, 20, 26
Positivism, 272
Potency and act, Ch. V § 2, 66, 78, 92, 94, 134, 270
Pragmatist -ism, 60, 61
Predestination, 185 *seq.*, and see Grace and Free Will
Prior and *Posterior Analytics* of Aristotle, the, 20
Private judgment, 266-8
Privation, St. Thomas' principle of, 196 *seq.*
Proportion and proportionality, 127 *seq.*, 169 *seq.*
Psychology, Ch. VIII § 3
Ptolemaic astronomy, 57, 192
Pygmalion, 70

RADBERTUS, PASCHASIUS, 17
Rashdall, H., *Universities of Europe in the Middle Ages*, xv, 282
Rationes seminales, 16, 196
Raymond of Pennafort, St., 41
Raynald, brother of St. Thomas, 35, 51
Realism, Ch. IV § 2, 75, 102-3
Reality, what constitutes? 61-2, 65; the nature of, Ch. V

Reality—*continued*
passim; used as synonymous with Being, 62, 99, 104, 221; as intelligible, 64; division into ten categories, 67, 121, 147; our knowledge of, true, 75-9, 83 and note, 84 *seq.*, 99; includes the actual and the possible, 78
Reason, 59-61, 205, 265
Reason and faith, relation between, see Faith and Reason
Reginald, St. Thomas' companion, 47-8, 51, 52
Regulars and seculars, feud between, at Paris, 8, 40, 44, 47
Relation, 79, Ch. V § 7, 180 *seq.*
Renan, 45
Reviews, see Bibliography, 282
Revues des Jeunes, 257 n.
Revue des Sciences Philosophiques et Théologiques, 269, 277
Rheims, Cathedral school at, 6
Richard, *Cœur de Lion*, 3
Rickaby, Fr. Joseph, S.J., 56 n.
Rimaud, J., see Bibliography, 282
Roccasecca, home of St. Thomas, 33, 35
Roland-Gosselin, M.-D., ix
Rougier, L., see Bibliography, 282
Rousselot, P., ix, 207 n., 218 n., 238, 273, 275, 282
Ruysbroeck, 253

Sanseverino, 257
San Germano, Peace of, 5
Scepticism, 22, 75, 76, 77, 100
Scholasticism, Ch. I § 4; foundations in Aristotelianism, 12; influence of Platonism on, 13; various systems after St. Thomas, 252 *seq.*, "silver age" of, 255; main scholastic tradition identified with Thomism, 258
Science, St. Thomas' ignorance of, viii, and attitude towards, 57, 193, 197; in modern Thomism, 269
Scientia Media, 187 *seq.*
Seculars at Paris, see Regulars and Seculars
Seneca, 34
Senses, the, and sense-experience, 16, 17, 31, 88, 95, 102, 103, 158, 168, 198 *seq.*, 210, 216 *seq.*, 245, 246, 261, 265; their part in knowledge, 79, 204, 220
Sertillanges, A. D., ix, 124, 137 n., 144 n., 178, 272, 282
Sex Principia of Gilbert de la Porree, 27
Sheen, J. F., see Bibliography, 282
Sicily, Ch. I § 1 *passim*
Siger de Brabant, 45-7, 208, 252
Socrates, 200, 208, 211, 223
Soto, 256
Soul, the, 94; vegetable, sensitive and rational, 197 *seq.*; Aristotelian definition of, 201, 208-9
Species intelligibiles, 81 *seq.*, 95, 203, 217, 218, 225
Spinoza, 109, 129, 165
Stockl, A., 257
Stoic, 207, 243
Suarez, F., 256
Substance, Ch. V § 3, 79, 108; Thomistic meaning of, 121
Summa contra Gentiles, see Aquinas: *Works*
Summa Theologica, see Aquinas: *Works*
Summum bonum, 139
Suso, H., 166, 253
Sutton, T., 251
Sylvester of Ferrara, 255 and note
Synderesis, 231, 240

Tagliacozzo, 6
Tauler, 237, 253
Tempier, Bishop of Paris, 46, 48, 252
Thiéry, 270
Theodora of Theate, mother of St. Thomas, 33
Theology and St. Thomas, 55-6, 168, 259
Thomas d'Aquin, St., by A. D. Sertillanges, quoted or referred to, 124, 137, 144, 178, with notes
Thomism, development of, Ch. I, §§ 2, 3, 4; an account of, Ch. III; grounds of, 77-8; later history of, Ch. X *passim*;

Thomism—*continued*
success of, 251 *seq.*; decline of, 252; the Scotist criticism of, 253; mystic writers inspired by, 253, 264; ignorance of, at the Renaissance, and subsequent revival of interest in, 257, 258; its present condition, 258, 262; principal modern tendencies, 271
Timæus, 19
Tocco, G. de, 52
Topics of Aristotle, the, 20
Toletus, 256
Transcendentals, the, Ch. V § 4, 172
Trent, Council of, 255
True, definition of the, 108
Truth, Ch. V § 4 *passim*, also, viii, 24, 30, 47, 53, 56, 229, 263, 266; meaning of, 80-4, 159; definition of, 92; as transcendental mode of being, 134 *seq.*

Unity, Ch. V *passim*, especially § 4
Universals, 20 and note, 26, 87, 127 *seq.*, 148 *seq.*, 221 *seq.*, 209, 219 *seq.*, 223-6
Universe, God and the, Ch. VII, cf. 58; the Physical, Ch. VIII § 1
Universities, the rise of the mediæval, 25-6
University of Paris, see Paris, University of
Urban IV, Pope, 5, 40, 45

Vasquez, M., 256
Von Hügel, Baron F., 264

Whitehead, A. N., 274 n.
Wicksteed, P. H., 147, 282
Will, divine, 175
Willenski, R. H., *The Principles of Modern Art*, 274 n.
William of Champeaux, 26
William of Mackelfield, 251
William of Moerbeke, 22
William of St. Amour, 40
Wisdom, of St. Thomas, 15, 52; extolled by St. Thomas, 61, 243
Works on St. Thomas, ix; their method and arrangement, 28, and see Bibliography, 281-2
Wyndham Lewis, P., *Time and Western Man*, 274 n.

Xenia Thomistica, see Bibliography, 282

Zybura, Olgiati-, *The Key to the Study of St. Thomas*, quoted, 108, and see Bibliography, 282

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